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## OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

'The book is a distinctly readable one.'—*Glasgow Herald*, September 18, 1902.

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'Is likely to have a large sale.'—*Saturday Review*, April 25, 1903.

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### Church of England.

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## OPINIONS OF THE PRESS—continued.

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THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY

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THE  
TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY

BEING AN  
Examination of the More Important Arguments  
For and Against Believing in that Religion

COMPILED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES BY  
LT.-COL. W. H. TURTON, D.S.O.  
ROYAL ENGINEERS

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FIFTH EDITION      SEVENTH THOUSAND

*(Carefully revised throughout)*

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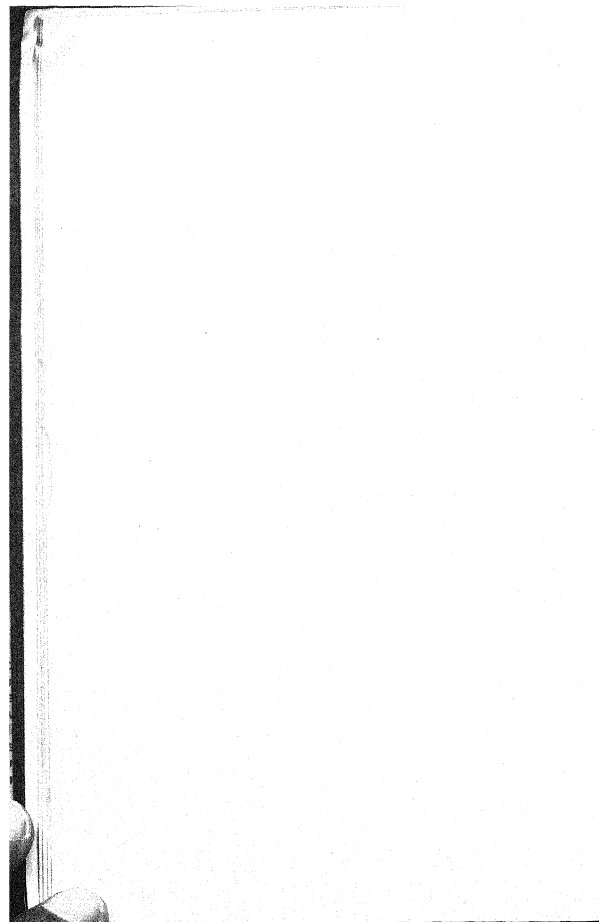
## PREFACE TO FIFTH EDITION.

THE whole Essay has been again carefully revised, and where possible shortened for this Edition. Some of the chapters have been rearranged, which has necessitated renumbering them, but of course the argument remains substantially what it has been all along. The work, as stated in the first edition, lays no claim to originality, and I have not hesitated to borrow arguments and illustrations from any source. The references to the Bible are all to the Revised Version.

W. H. T.

POTCHEFSTROOM,  
TRANSVAAL,  
*February, 1905.*





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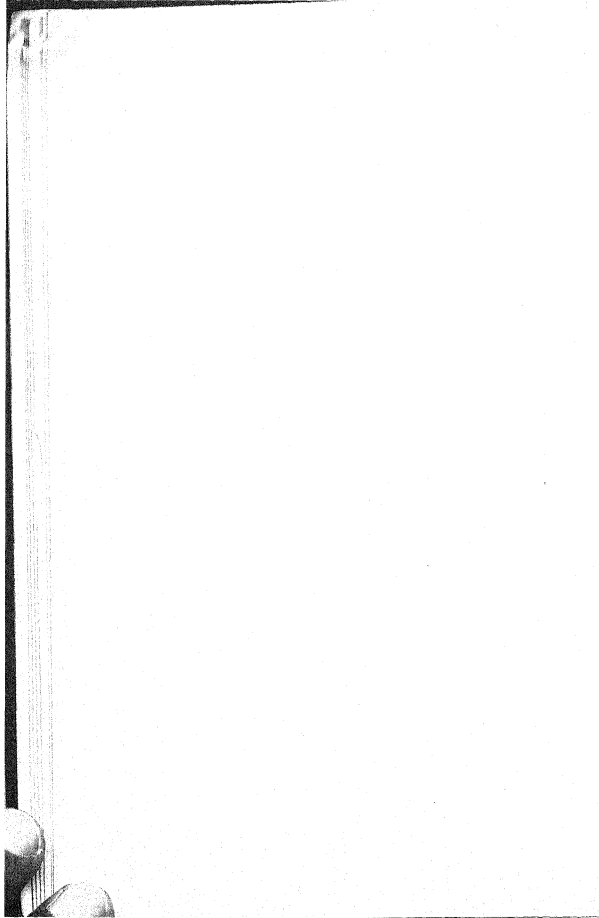
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## PART I.

### *NATURAL RELIGION.*

- CHAP. I. THAT THE UNIVERSE HAD A CREATOR.
- „ II. THAT THE CREATOR DESIGNED THE UNIVERSE.
- „ III. THAT THEREFORE THE EXISTENCE OF GOD IS EXTREMELY  
PROBABLE.
- „ IV. THAT MAN IS A FREE AND RESPONSIBLE BEING.
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TO MAN.
- „ VII. THAT THEREFORE A MIRACULOUS REVELATION IS CREDIBLE.



## CHAPTER I.

### THAT THE UNIVERSE HAD A CREATOR.

#### (A.) THE ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE.

Explanation of the universe, its origin, and a Free Force.

- (1.) The Philosophical Argument. If the universe had not an origin, it seems to necessitate that all events form a recurring series ; and this is incredible.
- (2.) The Scientific Argument. From the process of evolution and the dissipation of energy.

#### (B.) THE CREATOR.

The Single Supernatural Cause, which originated the universe.

It is proposed in this Essay to consider the reasons for and against believing in the truth of Christianity, meaning by that term the doctrines contained in the Three Creeds. For convenience the subject has been divided into three Parts and twenty-four Chapters ; though Part II., on the Jewish Religion, may be omitted by anyone not specially interested in that subject. At present we are considering *Natural Religion* only, which deals with the great questions of the Existence of God, and the probability of His making some Revelation to man. And we will commence at the very beginning.

## (A.) THE ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE.

Now by the universe is meant the *material* universe, that is to say the sum total of all the matter in the universe, including the luminiferous æther, as well as the stars and other celestial bodies. It therefore includes everything that exists, with the exception of immaterial or spiritual beings, if there are any such. And by this universe having had an *origin* is meant that it was at some time acted on by a *Free Force*, that is to say, by a force which does not always act the same under the same circumstances, but which is able to act or not as it pleases. Of course such a force would be totally different from all the known forces of nature ; but there is no difficulty in understanding what is meant by the term, since man himself seems to possess such a force in his own free will. We are not assuming that man's will is really free, but merely that the idea of a free force, able to act or not as it pleases, is well known to man and generally understood.

Hence the statement that the universe had an origin means that at some time or other it was acted on by such a Free Force ; in other words, it has not existed eternally under the fixed and invariable forces of nature, and without any external interference. And we have now to consider the two arguments in favour of this, which may be conveniently called the Philosophical and the Scientific argument.

(I.) *The Philosophical Argument.*

By this is meant that, when we reflect on the subject, it seems inevitable that if the universe had not an

origin, all present events must form part of a *recurring series*. The reason for thinking this is, that if all free force is excluded, it is plain that matter must be eternal, since its coming into existence at any time could not have been a necessity, and must therefore have been due to some free force. And it is equally plain that what we call the forces of nature and the properties of matter must also be eternal, since any alteration in them at any time would also have required a free force. And from this it follows that no *new* event can happen *now*. For every event which the forces of nature could possibly bring about of themselves would, since they have been acting from eternity, have been brought about long ago. Therefore present events are not new, but must have occurred before, and thus form part of a recurring series.

This is no doubt a possible theory. For example, if we assume that the universe will in process of time work itself back into precisely the same condition in which it was long ago as a nebula or anything else, when it will necessarily recommence precisely the same changes as before, then, and only then, is it possible that it has been going on doing so from all eternity. But this theory, though possible, is certainly not credible. For it requires that all events, past, present, and future, have occurred, and will occur, an infinite number of times. And when applied to a single example, say the history of the human race, this is seen to be quite incredible.

We are hence driven to the other alternative, which is that the universe has not existed eternally under



the fixed forces of nature, and without any external interference ; in other words, that it had an origin. No doubt there are difficulties in regard to this theory also, but they do not seem to be nearly so great as those in regard to the previous one, and are mostly due to our ignorance. We may not know, for instance, whether matter itself is eternal, or whether it began to exist in some manner inconceivable to us at the origin of the universe. Nor may we know how, on the former supposition, the free force acted, whether by causing matter to then assume its present properties, or by altering the conditions under which it was placed. Nor, again, may we have any idea as to why, if a free force once acted on the universe, it never apparently does so at present ; still less can we picture to ourselves what such a force would be like, though the difficulty here is no greater than that of picturing a force which is not free, say gravity.

But our ignorance about all this is no reason for doubting what we do know. And it appears to the writer that we do know that, unless present events form a recurring series, which seems incredible, the universe cannot have existed eternally without some *Free Force* having acted on it at some time. In short, it seems less difficult to believe that the universe had an origin than to believe that it had not.

(2.) *The Scientific Argument.*

And this conclusion is greatly strengthened by two scientific theories now generally accepted—that of the process of evolution and the dissipation of energy. The former seems to show that the universe had a

beginning a certain number of years ago ; and the latter, that it will have an end a certain number of years hence. And either of these, if admitted, is sufficient to establish the point.

The first subject, that of *Evolution*, is fully discussed in the next chapter. All that need be said here is, that the atoms of the universe with their evolving properties cannot have existed eternally without any interference ; for then the course of evolution would have commenced in the eternal past, and would therefore have been finished now. But this is certainly not the case, and evolution is still in progress ; or at all events was so a few thousand years ago. And therefore, as a state of progress cannot be eternal, it must have had a commencement. And this commencement cannot have been a necessity, so it must have been due to a Free Force somewhere. In other words, evolution necessarily assumes a previous *Evolver* ; it cannot originate itself.

The other theory, that of the *Dissipation of Energy*, is that the universe seems to be progressing towards a final uniformity of heat ; for all energy tends to heat, and heat tends to equal distribution. And when this has been reached, and all matter has the same temperature, it will be in a condition from which it cannot raise itself again. We need not go into the proofs of this theory, as it is generally admitted, but will only point out that it is not in any way opposed to the other and equally well established theory of the *Conservation of Energy*. For though the energy of the universe is conserved as to its total amount or quantity,

it is yet dissipated or equalized as to what we may call its quality. The heat, for instance, which is now stored up in the sun will in process of time be distributed throughout space, and the same applies to the whole universe. Now let this complete dissipation of energy take any number of millions of years, they are yet nothing to eternity. And, therefore, if the universe with all its present forces existed from eternity, and without any external interference, it must have been reduced to this state long ago. So that if this theory is correct, it seems not only probable, but certain, that the universe had an origin.

But an objection has now to be considered. It may be said that the above reasoning is merely another form of the old argument, "Everything must have a cause, and therefore there must have been a First Cause;" the obvious answer to which is, that then the First Cause must also have had a cause, and so on indefinitely. But this is not the case; for the alleged First Cause is of a different *kind* from all the others. It is a *Free* Cause, whereas natural causes are not free, but are themselves effects of other natural causes; and these, again, of previous ones. What we want is a cause which is *not* also an effect, in other words, a cause which is not moved by anything else, but is moved by itself, or *Free*. When once we get to such a cause as this, there is nothing more to explain.

This objection, then, cannot be maintained, and we therefore decide that the universe had an origin. And all we know at present about the Force which originated it, is that it was a Free Force. And the

conclusion at which we have arrived may be concisely expressed by saying, that before all natural causes which acted necessarily, there was a *First Cause* which acted voluntarily.

(B.) THE CREATOR.

We have next to consider what further we can ascertain in regard to this First Cause. To begin with it can scarcely be disputed at the present day that the First Cause was a *Single Cause*, as modern science has completely established the unity which pervades the universe. We know for instance that the same materials are used throughout, many of the elements which exist on this earth being also found in the sun and stars. Then there is the force of gravity, which is all-embracing, and applies equally to the most distant stars, and to the most minute objects on this earth. Then there is the luminiferous æther, which forms a kind of atmosphere, extending throughout the universe, and holding it together. Many other examples might be given ; but it is scarcely necessary, as everyone now admits that the universe (as the word implies) is one whole. And this plainly points to a *Single First Cause*. Indeed it seems almost a necessity that there cannot be more than one *First Cause*.

Nor can it be disputed that this First Cause was *Supernatural*, which merely means that it differs from all natural forces in being *free*; for this is exactly what we have shown. It was thus no kind of gravitation, no molecular attraction, no chemical affinity. All these and all similar forces would always act the same under the same conditions ; whereas the Force we are

considering was of precisely an opposite character. It was a Free Force, a Force which voluntarily chose to originate the universe at a certain time. And describing this Force as Supernatural is merely to emphasize this striking difference from all natural forces.

In conclusion we will call this *Single Supernatural Cause* which originated the universe its *Creator*, and hence the proposition at the head of this chapter follows at once. And it is obvious that all present phenomena in the universe are due ultimately to the Creator's action in originating it, though there may be, or may have been, other causes acting as well. And if it be objected that the universe may have had no *origin*, owing to some Free Force having been eternally acting on it, such a Force must also be Single and Supernatural, and therefore may equally well be called its Creator.

## CHAPTER II.

### THAT THE CREATOR DESIGNED THE UNIVERSE.

Design means originating combined with foreknowledge.

#### (A.) EVIDENCE OF DESIGN.

Seems overwhelming throughout organic nature ; and we are not appealing to it to show the Creator's existence, but merely His foreknowledge.

- (1.) The example of a watch : its marks of design show that it had a maker who foresaw its use.
- (2.) The human eye has also marks of design, and must also have had a Designer.
- (3.) The evidence cumulative : other marks of design.

#### (B.) THE EVOLUTION OBJECTION.

- (1.) Meaning of Evolution : it is a process, not a cause.
- (2.) Its effect on the present argument : it can only increase the evidence for design.

#### (C.) THE FREE WILL OBJECTION.

- (1.) Its great improbability : for several reasons.
- (2.) Free Will and Foreknowledge not incompatible ; so the chief argument in its favour cannot be maintained. Conclusion.

HAVING decided that the universe had a Creator, we have next to examine whether the Creator designed the universe. Now by *Design* is meant *originating combined with foreknowledge* ; so that any voluntary action, combined with foreknowledge of the results

that will follow from such action, is to design those results. In the case before us, we have already shown that the Creator did originate the universe. The question, then, that remains to be discussed is whether, when so doing, He foreknew the consequences of His action. If He did, it is equivalent to His designing those consequences, as the word is here used. And these include, directly or indirectly, the present state of the universe.

By the word *foreknowing* it is not meant that the Creator necessarily *thought* of all future events, however insignificant, such as the position of the leaves on each tree; but merely that He was able to foresee any of them He wished, and in this sense foreknew them. Compare the converse case of memory, a man may be able to remember a thousand events in his life; but they are not all before his mind's eye at the same time, and the insignificant ones may never be. In the same way the Creator may have had the capacity of foreseeing all future events in the world's history without actually thinking about them. At all events, this is the kind of foresight, or rather foreknowledge, which is meant to be included in the term *design*.

#### (A.) EVIDENCE OF DESIGN.

Passing on now to the evidence of design, this is of the most varied kind, especially throughout organic nature, where we find countless objects, which seem to point to the foresight of the Cause which produced them. And it will be noticed that we are not appealing to these marks of design as showing the existence of the Creator, as is sometimes done, but merely His

foreknowledge. His *existence* has been already established, and also the fact that the universe was originated by Him. All we are now investigating is whether, when He originated it, He foreknew its future course ; and the apparent evidence in favour of this is overwhelming. Everywhere in nature, from the highest forms to the lowest, we meet with apparent marks of design. They are ubiquitous and innumerable. The evidence is indeed so vast that it is difficult to deal with it satisfactorily. Perhaps the best way will be to follow the well-known watch argument of Paley, and first show by the example of a watch what it is that constitutes marks of design ; next, how a single organ, say the human eye, possesses these marks ; and lastly, the cumulative nature of the evidence.

(1.) *The example of a watch.*

Now, when we examine a watch, we see that it bears marks of design, because the several parts are put together for a *purpose*. They are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and this motion is so regulated as to point out the hour of the day. While, if they had been differently shaped or differently arranged, either no motion at all would have been produced, or none which would have answered the same purpose. And from this, two inferences seem to follow at once. The first is that the watch must have had a *maker* somewhere and at some time ; and the second is that this maker understood its construction, and *designed* it for the purpose which it actually serves.

These conclusions, it will be noticed, would not be affected by the fact that we had never seen a watch



made, never knew a man capable of making one, had no idea how the work could be done, and could not even understand the whole of the mechanism. All this would only exalt our opinion of the unknown watchmaker's skill, but would raise no doubt in our minds either as to his existence or as to his having made the watch for the purpose it serves.

Nor would we feel the watch explained by being told that every part of it worked in strict accordance with natural laws, and could not possibly move otherwise than it did ; in fact, that there was no design to account for. We should feel that, though the action of every part might be in strict accordance with law, yet the fact that all these parts agreed in this one particular, that they all concurred to enable the watch to tell the time, did evidence design somewhere. In other words, we should feel that the properties of matter could only partly account for the watch, and that it required an intelligent watchmaker as well, who utilised these properties so as to enable the watch to tell the time.

Now suppose that on further investigation we found the watch also possessed the unexpected property of producing in the course of its movements another watch very like itself. This is at least conceivable. For instance, it might contain a set of lathes, files, and other tools, able automatically to form the new works, or a mould in which they might be cast. What effect would this have on our former conclusions ? It would plainly increase our admiration for the watch, and our conviction of the consummate skill of the

unknown watchmaker. If without this extra property the watch required a skilful maker, still more would it do so with it. And this conclusion would not be altered by the fact that very possibly the watch we were examining was itself produced from some previous one, and perhaps that from another. We should feel that, though each watch might be produced from the previous one, it was in no sense *designed* by it. And hence this would not in any way weaken our conviction as to the existence of a watchmaker somewhere and at some time who designed the whole series.

This, then, is the watch argument. Wherever we find marks of design, there must be a designer somewhere ; and this conclusion cannot be altered by any other considerations whatever. If, then, we find in nature any objects showing marks of design, the obvious inference is that they also must have had a designer. And this inference, it should be noticed, does not depend on any supposed *analogy* between the works of man and the works of nature. The example of the watch is merely given *as an example*, to show clearly what the design argument is ; but the argument itself would be just as sound if man never had made, and never could make, any object showing marks of design.

Moreover, to complete the example, we must assume that the existence of the watchmaker, and the fact of his having made the watch are already admitted for other reasons ; and that we are only appealing to these marks of design to show that when he made the watch he must have known that it would be able to

tell the time, and presumably made it for that purpose. In this case the inference appears, if possible, to be still stronger.

(2.) *The human eye.*

We will now pass on to consider the human eye as an example of natural organs showing marks of design. It is a well-known instance, but none the worse on that account. Now it is necessary, in order to produce distinct vision, that an image or picture of the object should be formed at the back of the eye, that is, on the retina or expansion of the optic nerve, which communicates the impression to the brain. And the eye is an optical instrument for producing this picture, and in some respects very similar to a telescope. And its marks of design are abundant and overwhelming.

To begin with, in both the eye and the telescope the rays of light have to be *refracted*, so as to produce a distinct image. And the humours in the eye which effect this resemble the lenses of a telescope both in their curved shape, their position, and their power over the rays of light. Moreover, the *different* humours through which the rays pass correct what would otherwise be an imperfection in vision, caused by the rays being partly separated into different colours. The same difficulty had to be overcome in telescopes, and this does not seem to have been effected till it occurred to opticians to imitate in glasses made from different materials the effect of the different humours in the eye.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Encyc. Brit., 9th edit., vol. xxiii., p. 137.

In the next place, the eye has to be suited to perceive objects at different *distances*, varying from inches to miles. In telescopes this would be done either by putting in another lens, or by some focussing arrangement. How it is effected in the eye is not known for certain, but it plainly is effected, and with marvellous correctness. A landscape of several miles is brought within a space of half an inch in diameter. And yet the multitude of objects it contains, at least the larger ones, are all preserved, and can each be distinguished in its size, shape, colour, and position. And yet the same eye that can do this can read a book at the distance of a few inches.

Again, the eye has to be adapted to different *degrees of light*. This is effected by the iris, which is a kind of screen in the shape of a ring, capable of expanding or contracting so as to alter the size of the central hole or pupil, yet always retaining its circular form. Moreover, it is somehow or other self-adjusting; for if the light is too strong, the pupil at once contracts. It is needless to point out how desirable such an automatic diaphragm would be in photography, and how greatly we should admire the skill of its inventor.

Again, the eye can perceive objects in different *directions*; for it is hinged in such a way that it can turn with the greatest rapidity right or left, up or down, without moving the head. While in order to keep it *moist* and *clean*, both of which are essential to its utility, a special fluid is constantly supplied, the superfluous moisture passing through a hole in the bone to the nose, where it is evaporated. Moreover, this valuable

instrument is provided *in duplicate*, the pair of eyes being so adjusted that while each can see separately should the other get injured, yet, as a rule, they can both see together with perfect harmony. Lastly, our admiration for the eye is still further increased when we remember that it was formed *before birth*. It was a *prospective* organ, of no use at the time when it was made; and this, when carefully considered, shows design more plainly than anything else.

Several more points regarding the eye might be enumerated, but the above are sufficient to show the general style of the evidence. The eye is, in fact, an optical instrument of great complexity and ingenuity; and the conclusions that it must have been made by someone, and that whoever made it must have known and designed its use, seem inevitable.

These conclusions, it will be noticed, like the similar ones in regard to the watch, are not affected by our ignorance on many points. We may have no idea as to how an eye can be made, nor even understand all its parts, and yet feel certain that, as the eye exists, it must have been made by someone, and that its maker designed it for the purpose it serves, and evidently knew far more about its construction than we do.

Nor do we feel the eye explained by being told that every part of it has been produced in strict accordance with natural laws, and could not have been otherwise; in fact, that there is no design to account for. No doubt every single part has been thus produced, and if it stood alone there might be little to account for. But it does not stand alone. All the various and

complicated parts of the eye agree in this one remarkable point, and in this one only, that they all conduce to enable man to see; and it is this that requires explanation. We feel that there must be some connection between the cause which brought all these parts together and the fact of man's seeing. In other words the effect must have been designed.

Nor does the fact that organisms of each kind in nature succeed one another by generation alter this conclusion. Indeed, as was shown with reference to the watch, it can only increase our admiration for the consummate skill which must have been expended on the first organism of each kind. Moreover, no part of the design can be attributed to the *parent*. In other words, if the eyes of a child show design, it is not due to the intelligence or designing power of its father and mother. *They* have not calculated the proper shape for the lenses, or the mechanism of the iris, and as a rule know nothing whatever about it. And the same applies to *their* parents, so that our going back ever so far in this way brings us no nearer to what we are in search of. The design is still unaccounted for, we still want a designer.

We hence conclude that the marks of design in the eye afford, at all events, a very strong *primâ facie* argument in favour of a *Designer*. And if only one eye existed in the universe, and there were no other marks of design in nature, this conclusion would be none the less clear.

(3.) *The evidence cumulative.*

But the argument is far stronger than this. It is

cumulative in a *triple* sense. To begin with, an eye is found not in one man only, but in millions of men, each separately showing marks of design, and each separately requiring a designer. Secondly, the human eye is only one example out of hundreds in the human body. The ear or the mouth would prove the conclusion equally well, and so would the lungs or the heart. And these various organs, it should be noticed, do not exist merely as individual organs, but as component parts of the human body, to which, as well as to each other, they are all adapted. And if a hundred independent organs showing design would require a designer, still more will they do so if, instead of being independent, they are thus adapted to one another. Moreover, the *mind* of man has to be accounted for, as well as his body ; and if the unforeseen action of atoms could not have produced a human body, with its wonderful marks of design, still less could they have produced a human mind able to know and argue about them. While, thirdly, human beings are but one out of many thousands of organisms in nature, all bearing equally the marks of design, and showing in some cases an even greater ingenuity than in the human eye.

Of course, as a rule, the lower organisms, being less complicated than the higher ones, have less striking marks of design, but their existence is equally clear. The flowers and other reproductive organs of plants may be mentioned as well-known instances from the vegetable kingdom. And even where we cannot understand the design, we can infer its existence. An acorn, for instance, must be of a very ingenious structure to

enable it to develop into an oak-tree. It should also be noticed that there are several other classes of phenomena which show design to some extent, such as the instincts of certain animals, and the mutual relation between plants and animals; the latter living upon organic matter, which they cannot produce for themselves from earth, air, and water, but which they find ready for use in plants. Nor is this all, for the world itself bears traces of having been designed. Had it been a mere chaos, we might have thought that the Creator was unaware of what would be the result of His action. But a planet like our earth, so admirably adapted for the support of life, can scarcely have been produced by accident.

We hence conclude, on reviewing the whole subject, that various phenomena in nature, more especially organs like the eye, bear strong marks of having been *designed*; and the further conclusion that the Designer should be the same as the Creator of the universe, who originated the whole of nature, is too plain to need insisting on. Now there are two, and only two, important objections to this argument, which may be conveniently called the *Evolution* and the *Free Will* objection.

(B.) THE EVOLUTION OBJECTION.

The first objection is that everything in nature has been brought about in accordance with fixed laws by the process of Evolution; and therefore, though it is possible the Creator may have foreseen all present phenomena, yet the apparent marks of design in nature, being all the necessary and inevitable results of those



laws, do not afford any evidence that He actually did so. And before discussing this objection we must first consider somewhat carefully what we mean by laws of nature and natural forces. Now by a *law of nature* is meant an observed uniformity of natural phenomena. For example, it is called a law or rule of nature that, with certain exceptions, heat should expand bodies, which merely means that we know it does so, and do not know why it does so. In other words, we observe that heat is nearly always followed by expansion, and we therefore assume that the one is the cause of the other. But calling it a law of nature for heat to expand bodies, does not in any way account for its doing so. And the same is true universally, so that a law of nature *explains* nothing, it is merely a summary of the facts to be explained.

It should also be noticed that a law of nature *effects* nothing. It has no coercive power whatever. The law of gravitation, for instance, has never moved a planet, any more than the rules of navigation have steered a ship. In each case it is some power or force acting according to law which does it. And *natural* forces are those which, as far as we know, *always* act according to some fixed law. They have no freedom of choice, they cannot act or not as they like; they must always and everywhere act the same under the same circumstances. We pass on now to the subject of Evolution, and we will first consider its meaning, and then its effect on the present argument.

(1.) *The meaning of Evolution.*

Now by the term Evolution is meant to be included

the processes of Organic Evolution, Natural Selection, and Survival of the Fittest. The former may be described as meaning that all the varied forms of life now existing, or that ever have existed on this earth, are the descendants of earlier and less developed forms, and those again of yet simpler ones ; and so on, till we arrive at the first parents of all living beings in certain nodules of what may be popularly called animated jelly. And the theories of *Natural Selection* and *Survival of the Fittest* explain how this may have taken place. For among the various slight modifications that would most likely occur in every organism, those, and those only, would be perpetuated which were of advantage to it in the struggle for existence. And these would in time, it is assumed, become hereditary in its descendants, and thus higher forms of life would be gradually produced. And the value of these theories is that they show how Organic Evolution may have taken place without involving any sudden change, such as a monkey giving birth to a man.

It will, of course, be noticed that Evolution is thus a *process*, and not a *cause*. It is the method in which certain phenomena have been brought about, and not the cause which brings them about. Every slight modification must have been caused somehow. When such modifications were caused, then Natural Selection can explain how the useful ones alone were perpetuated, but it cannot explain how the modifications themselves arose. On the contrary, it necessarily supposes them as already existing, otherwise there would be nothing to select from. Natural Selection, then, rather weeds

than plants. Among the various modifications in an organism, some good and some bad, it merely shows how the useless ones would disappear, and the useful ones alone would be perpetuated ; in other words, how the fittest would survive. But this survival of the fittest does not explain in the slightest degree how the fitness arose. If, as an extreme example, out of a hundred animals, fifty had eyes and fifty had none, it is easy to understand how those that had eyes would be more likely to perpetuate their species ; but this does not explain how they first got eyes. And the same applies in other cases.

How, then, did the variations in each organism first arise ? In common language they may be ascribed to chance, but, strictly speaking, such a thing is impossible. The word *chance* is merely a convenient term for the results of certain forces of nature when we are unable to calculate them. Chance, then, must be excluded ; and there seem to be only two alternatives to choose from. Either the organisms in nature possessed free will, and acted as they did *voluntarily*, or else they did not possess free will, and acted as they did *necessarily*. The former hypothesis will be examined later on ; the latter is the one we are now considering. And it is plainly equivalent to all the organisms in nature being mere machines, the future action of which was settled the last time a free external Force (*i.e.*, the Creator) acted on them. And this on the evolution theory was not later than at the origin of the earliest form of life. Since then, everything has been brought about by the ordinary forces of nature, or, assuming these as fixed,

everything has been automatic and the necessary consequence of what went before.

(2.) *The effect of Evolution.*

Now, would this invalidate our previous conclusion that the Creator designed all the organs in nature, such as the eye, and hence presumably the whole of the universe? On the contrary, it corroborates it. For to put it plainly, if all free will on the part of the organisms is excluded, as well as all interference from the Creator, or any other external Power, the earth and all it contains is like a huge mass of machinery. And however complicated its parts, and however much they may act or react on each other, and however long they may take in doing so, if in the end they produce an organ showing design, this must have been foreseen and intended by the Maker of the machinery. In the same way if a mass of machinery after working for a long time eventually turned out a watch, we should have no hesitation in saying that whoever made the machinery, and set it going, intended it to do so.

All then that evolution does is to show that the organisms in nature, instead of being designed separately, were all included in one grand design from the very beginning. And this can only increase our admiration for the Designer. Thus evolution, even in its most extreme and automatic form, cannot get rid of a Designer. Still less can it do so, if (as is probable) it is not automatic at all; but is due to the *continuous* action of the Creator, who is *immanent* in nature, and directs every step.

It should be noticed, moreover, that some of the

most striking marks of design cannot be explained by evolution at all, as, for instance, the human eye. It is quite clear that wishing to see or trying to see, even if blind animals were capable of either, would never give them eyes. But it may be said that some of the earlier and less developed organisms had only *rudimentary* eyes, which could not see, but which in their structure and position resembled seeing eyes, and which became such in their later descendants. And does not this show that the eye could not have been designed by the Creator, or He would have given animals perfect eyes at once ?

On the contrary, the inference is in favour of design. For there is nothing improbable in the Creator producing eyes, like the rest of nature, in accordance with some fixed plan, and by this slow process of Evolution. But on any other theory the rudimentary eye is quite inexplicable, for it was of no possible use to its owner in the struggle for existence. It was rather a *prospective* organ, slowly evolved and perfected during many generations, without being of any use till nearly finished. And this shows design as plainly as anything can. It seems clear, then, that uncontrolled Evolution—that is to say, Evolution merely by accidental variations, as they are called—and Survival of the Fittest, cannot account for the eye at all. In fact, it requires not natural selection but *supernatural selection* to explain it satisfactorily.

But now suppose, for the sake of argument, that this were otherwise, and that the eye and all other organs had been produced merely by natural pro-

cesses ; in the same way for instance that a human hand may have been evolved from a monkey's foot, merely by the monkey trying (involuntarily of course) to use it as a hand, and take hold of things. Does this destroy the evidence for design ? Certainly not ; it only increases it. For to manufacture a foot which should in the course of time become a hand, as the animal kept trying to use it as such, would require far more design than to manufacture a hand straight off, as we should say. And the same argument applies universally, so that if the present organs in nature have all been evolved automatically, from simpler ones, it increases the amount of design which must have been spent on those simpler ones to an extent which is practically infinite.

Thus Evolution necessarily implies a previous *Involution* ; for all forms of life must have been involved in the first form before they could be evolved from it ; so that creation by evolution is far more wonderful than creation by direct manufacture. And, as before said, it seems to be a far nobler conception of the Creator that He should obtain all the results He desired by one grand system of evolution, rather than by creating each species separately. For then the *method* in which the results were obtained would be as marvellous, and show as much wisdom and foresight as the results themselves, and each would be on a par with the other. Evolution, then, seems to be the highest form of creation ; and so far from destroying Theism, it only destroys the difficulties of Theism, by showing that every single part of every

single organism may have been *designed*, and yet in a manner worthy of an Infinite Being.

Nor is the argument affected if we carry back the process of evolution, and assume that the first nodules of animated jelly were themselves evolved by some natural, though to us unknown, process from previous forms of inanimate matter; and these again from simpler forms, and so on till we get back to the original state of matter, whatever that may have been. For if the results as we now see them show design, then the deduction from this as to the existence, and still more, since this is admitted, as to the *foreknowledge*, of a Designer, is not weakened, but our ideas of His skill are greatly increased, if we believe that these results were already secured when our earth was merely a nebula.

#### (C.) THE FREE WILL OBJECTION.

We have, lastly, to consider the more important objection, that arising from *Free Will*. Why, 't is urged, may not all organic beings have possessed free will within certain limits, and have voluntarily selected those forms which suited them best? For example, referring to the analogy of a watch, if telling the time were of any advantage to the watch itself, and if the spring, wheels, and hands possessed free will, then it might be thought that they had formed themselves into that arrangement which suited them best; and if so, the hypothesis that the watchmaker foresaw and intended them to adopt this arrangement seems unnecessary.

Now, in the case before us, as the organs showing design in nature, such as the eye, always conduce to

the welfare of their possessor, the objection is certainly credible, but, as we shall see, it is most improbable; while the chief argument in its favour cannot be maintained. It need scarcely be pointed out that we are not assuming that the organisms have free will, but merely admitting that they may have it. And if anyone denies this, the objection, as far as he is concerned, falls to the ground at once

(1.) *Its great improbability.*

This is apparent for three reasons. In the first place, low down in the scale of nature, the free will of the organisms, if they have any, must be very limited. It is difficult, for instance, to imagine that plants and trees have a free will at all resembling that of man; and yet they bear unmistakable marks of design. Secondly, in higher organisms, which may perhaps have a free will capable of working towards a definite end, it is difficult to see why they should have developed organs, like the rudimentary eye, which were not for their own advantage but for that of their remote descendants. And how, we may ask, did blind animals know anything about the value of sight or the proper means of obtaining it? While, thirdly, even in those cases where free will seems strongest, as in man himself, there is no evidence that it can effect anything like what is required. Suppose, for instance, men wanted to have three eyes instead of two, can anyone suggest how they would set about obtaining the third? And yet, if they have voluntarily given themselves two, they should be able with sufficient time to give themselves three.



For all these reasons, then, it is most improbable that the marks of design in nature were due to the organisms themselves rather than to their Creator. But there is one important argument on the other side, which, if it could be maintained, would be sufficient to outweigh all this improbability. It is, that some beings, such as man, do, as a matter of fact, possess a free will, and that man can and does alter his condition, to a slight extent, by using that free will. And therefore it is said it is impossible for the Creator to have foreknown what man's condition would be, because free will and foreknowledge are *necessarily* incompatible. But this latter point is disputed.

(2.) *Free Will and Foreknowledge not incompatible.*

Now, although at first sight freedom of action seems inconsistent with any foreknowledge of what that action will be, yet on closer examination this will be found to be at least doubtful. For our own experience seems to show that in some cases, at all events, it is not in the nature of things impossible to foreknow how a free being will act.

For example, I myself may know how, under given external conditions, I will act to-morrow. Never being sure of these, I cannot be said to actually foreknow the event ; so that foreknowing with man is never more than foreguessing. But I may be quite sure how, *under given conditions*, I will act. For instance, I may know that, provided I keep in good health, provided I receive no news from anyone, provided, etc., I will go to my office some time to-morrow morning. And yet I feel equally sure that this foreknowledge of

mine does not prevent the act when it comes from being quite free on my part. My knowing this even-  
ing what I shall do to-morrow does not oblige me to do it. My foreknowledge of the event does not bring the event about. It is in no sense its *cause*. The act when it comes is due to my own free will, I merely foreknow *what use I shall make of my freedom*. And these are probably the common feelings of mankind on the subject.

It seems, then, that my foreknowledge need not be inconsistent with my free will. And hence, if I tell somebody else how I shall act, *his* foreknowledge would not be inconsistent with my free will. So that in some cases, and with assumed external conditions, it does not seem impossible for a man to foreknow how another man will act, and yet without interfering with his freedom. In short, free will does not seem to be necessarily incompatible with the foreknowledge even of man, though it is always practically so, owing to man's imperfect knowledge of the surrounding circumstances. But the Creator knows, or may know, these circumstances fully, and therefore it must be still less incompatible with *His* foreknowledge.

And this is strongly confirmed when we reflect that the difficulty of knowing how a free being will act, however great in itself, seems as nothing compared with the difficulty of *creating* a free being. Apart from experience, we should probably pronounce this to be really impossible. And yet man has been created somehow. Is it then unlikely that the Being who was able to surmount the greater difficulty, and to create

a free man, should also be able to surmount the lesser difficulty, and to foreknow how he would act? Moreover, if free will and foreknowledge are *always* and *necessarily* incompatible, then the Creator can have no foreknowledge of *His Own* acts, or else they are not free on His part; neither of which seems a probable alternative. We are not, of course, arguing from all this that He actually does foreknow how He will act Himself, or how a free man will act, but only that it is not in the nature of things impossible that He should do so; in other words, that free will and foreknowledge are not *necessarily* incompatible.

And this is precisely what we had to show. The marks of design in nature afford what seems to be overwhelming evidence in favour of the foreknowledge of the Creator. The objection we are considering is that, in spite of all this evidence, we must still deny it, because the organisms in nature, including man, have, or may have, free will; and if so, any foreknowledge is in the nature of things impossible. And the instant it is shown that such foreknowledge is not impossible, the objection falls to the ground.

We may now sum up the argument in this chapter. We first explained *Design* as meaning originating combined with foreknowledge. We next considered the evidence for design, especially from organic nature, choosing a single example, the human eye, on which to focus the argument. And this evidence appeared to be complete and overwhelming, more especially as we were not appealing to it to show the existence of a Creator, which is already admitted, but merely His

foreknowledge. And we have since considered the two apparent objections to this argument arising from Evolution and Free Will. But when carefully examined, the former only strengthens the argument, while the latter does not invalidate it. We therefore conclude, on reviewing the whole subject, that the Creator *designed the universe*.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THAT THEREFORE THE EXISTENCE OF GOD IS EXTREMELY PROBABLE.

(A.) MEANING OF THE TERM GOD.

The Personal Being who designed and originated the universe : two of His attributes, Omniscience and Omnipotence.

(B.) THE OBJECTION THAT GOD IS UNKNOWABLE.

This is partly true ; but everything is unknowable in its real nature, though in each case the partial knowledge we can obtain is all we require.

(C.) RECAPITULATION OF ARGUMENT.

(A.) MEANING OF THE TERM GOD.

WE decided in the last chapter that the Creator designed the universe ; in other words, that when He originated it He foreknew its future history. Now any being who is able to design we will call a *personal being*. And GOD is the name given to the Personal Being who designed and originated the universe. Hence the proposition at the head of this chapter follows at once.

Before, however, leaving the subject of *personality*, it should be noticed that the term when applied to man is commonly used in a much wider sense than is

here given to it, and includes various other attributes, such as self-consciousness, besides the power of designing. Many writers indeed say it involves the three ideas of *thought*, *desire*, and *will*; but these seem to be all included in designing; for if I design anything, I must first of all *think* of it, then *wish* it, and then *accomplish* it. We will examine in the next chapter whether man is a personal being as we have defined the term; but two remarks may be made here.

The first is, that if we admit the personality of *man*, we have another and independent argument in favour of that of the Creator. For man, with all his attributes, has been somehow or other produced by the Creator. And, therefore, He cannot be a mere impersonal Being or Force, for such a Being could have formed no conception of personality, much less have produced such a result in ourselves. In other words, the personality of man's *Maker* necessarily follows from that of man.

The other remark is that the idea of human personality introduces a great difficulty; indeed, many consider it the greatest difficulty in regard to Theism: we mean that of believing that the Creator is a Personal Being in any similar sense. For a human person, as generally understood, means an individual, and individuality or separate existence implies the existence of something else external to the person from which he is separated; and it thus involves limitations of some kind. On the other hand, the Creator or First Cause of the universe seems to be Eternal, Omnipresent, and All-embracing.

There is an undoubted difficulty here, but it is probably due to our ignorance. Personality with man may imply limitations, but Personality with the Creator need not. In the same way, *seeing* with man implies an organ of sight ; but *seeing* with the Creator, or rather His unknown attribute, which is least inadequately represented by that term, certainly does not. In short, a human idea when transferred to the Deity is necessarily incomplete and imperfect. And it may be added, that many who hesitate to ascribe Personality to the First Cause do so for this very reason, that the term is inadequate rather than incorrect. The choice, they say, is not between personality and something lower than personality, but between personality and something higher<sup>1</sup> ; and the First Cause is no more representable in terms of human consciousness than human consciousness is representable in terms of plant functions. Under these circumstances, we have thought it better to limit the meaning of personality to the idea of designing. And in this sense the evidence that the Creator of the Universe is a Personal Being is, as we have seen, overwhelming.

We must next notice somewhat carefully two of His attributes, *Wisdom* and *Power*. Both of these are necessarily implied in the idea of a Personal Being able to design. For *design*, as used in this Essay, includes originating or freely doing anything, as well as previously planning it. And therefore, if we use the word, as is often done, for planning alone, we must

<sup>1</sup> Herbert Spencer. First Principles, 4th Edition, 1880, p. 109.

remember that a personal being is one who can both design and accomplish. The former implies a mind able to form some plan, and the latter a free force, or will, able to carry it out. And, therefore, a personal being must of necessity have wisdom to design and power to accomplish. And considering the vastness of the universe and the complexity of its organisms, it seems only reasonable to conclude that the Creator possesses both of these attributes to the greatest possible extent, so that He is Omniscient and Omnipotent.

But it is important to notice the meaning given to these words. *Omniscience*, then, means possessing all possible knowledge. Now the only knowledge which might be thought impossible is how a free being would act in the future, and we have already shown that such knowledge is not in the nature of things impossible; so there does not seem to be any necessary restriction here.

But with *Omnipotence* the case is different. This means, as said above, possessing all possible power; that is to say, being able to do anything which is not impossible. Of course some Christians may be inclined to answer that *with God all things are possible*;<sup>1</sup> but as He who said so prefaced one of His own prayers with the words *if it be possible*, this cannot be taken in its widest sense. And provided the word *impossible* is used in its strict meaning, we have no reason for thinking that God could do impossible things; such as make a triangle with the properties of a circle,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 19. 26 ; 26. 39.



or allow a man a free choice between two alternatives, and yet force him to choose one of them. These, then, are two of the great attributes of God, Wisdom and Power. There is a third, which will be considered in Chapter V.

It should also be noticed that besides being the Designer and Originator of the universe in the past, God seems to be also its *Maintainer* at the present, being, in fact, the Omnipresent Power which is still working throughout nature. That there is such a Power can scarcely be denied, and that it is the same as the Originating Power is plainly the most probable hypothesis. God is thus the Cause of all natural forces now, just as He was their Originator in times past; and what are called secondary or natural causes, though the term is a useful one, have probably no existence. They may, indeed, be called secondary *forces*, but they are not *causes* at all in the strict sense; for a cause must be *free*, it must have the power of initiative. Thus man's free will, if it is free, would be a real secondary cause, but the forces of nature are merely links in a chain of necessary events. This is often spoken of as the Divine *Immanence* in nature, and means little else than the Omnipresence of a Personal God—the all-pervading influence of One “who is never so far off as even to be called near.”

And it may be pointed out that if God is thus immanent in nature, and all natural forces the immediate effect of His Will, then as long as His Will remains the same, these forces will be invariable. And, therefore, their being so at present is no argu-

ment against the Theistic theory. It would be an argument against a capricious God, but not against One whose power is guided by wisdom, and directed for a definite purpose.

(B.) THE OBJECTION THAT GOD IS UNKNOWABLE.

We must lastly consider an important objection which may be made to the whole argument in these chapters. It may be said that the human mind is unable to argue about the *First Cause*, because we have no faculties for comprehending the Infinite; or, as it is commonly expressed, because God is *Unknowable*.

Now this objection is partly true. There is a sense in which all will admit that God is Unknowable. His existence and attributes are too great for any human mind to comprehend entirely, or for any human language to express completely and accurately. And, therefore, all our statements on the subject are at best only approximations to the truth. We can apprehend His existence, but we cannot comprehend it, and God alone knows fully what the term means. We need have no hesitation, then, in admitting that God in His true Nature is *Unknowable*.

But, strictly speaking, it is the same with everything. Man in his true nature is also unknowable, but yet we know something about him. So, again, the forces of nature are all unseen and unknowable in themselves, but yet from their effects we know something about them. And even matter when reduced to molecules and atoms is still a mystery, and yet we know a good deal about matter. And in each case this knowledge is not unreal because it is incomplete.

Why, then, should the fact of God being in His true Nature unknowable prevent our having some real, though partial, knowledge of Him, and arranging that knowledge in scientific order? In short, we may know something about God, though we cannot know everything about Him.

And it should be noticed that Natural Theology and Natural Science are alike in this respect—they are both founded on inferences drawn from the observed phenomena of nature. For example, we observe the motion of falling bodies, and infer the existence of some force, gravity, to account for this. Similarly, we observe the marks of design throughout nature, and infer the existence, or at least foresight, of some Being who designed them. In neither case have we any direct knowledge about the cause of the phenomena. And in some respects Theology is not so unknowable as Science. For our own, real or apparent, mind and free will do give us some kind of idea of the existence of a personal being apart from what he does; whereas of a natural force, such as gravity, apart from its effects we can form no conception whatever. Thus our knowledge of every subject is but partial, and it finally leads us into the Unknowable.

But now comes the important point. This partial knowledge, which is all we can obtain in either Science or Theology, is all we require. It is not a perfect knowledge, but it is sufficient for all practical purposes. Whatever the force of gravity may be in itself, we know what it is *to us*. We know that if we jump off a cliff we shall fall to the ground. And so in regard

to Theology. Whatever God may be in Himself, we know what He is *to us*. We know that He is our Maker, and therefore, as will be shown in the next chapter, the Being to whom we are responsible. This is the practical knowledge which we require, and this is knowledge which we can obtain.

Moreover, though our reason may be to some extent unfit to judge of such matters, the vast importance of the subject seems to demand our coming to some conclusion one way or the other. This is especially the case because important results affecting a man's daily life follow from deciding the question of God's existence in the affirmative, and to leave it undecided is practically to decide it in the negative. In the same way, if a ship were in danger of sinking, and a steamer also in distress offered to take off the passengers, for one of them to say that he had not sufficient data to determine whether it was safer to go in the steamer, and would therefore do nothing and stay where he was, would be practically the same as deciding not to go in the steamer. So in the case before us. To refuse to decide the question owing to the alleged inadequacy of human reason is practically the same as to deny the existence of God.

Still, it may be urged, granting that our reason must decide the question one way or the other, and granting that our reason seems to force us to conclude in the existence of God, are there not great difficulties in honestly believing this conclusion? No doubt there are, and no thoughtful man would think of ignoring them. But after all it is only a choice of difficulties.

If reason is to decide the question, our beliefs must move in the *line of least resistance*. And, as we have shown in the previous chapters, there is less difficulty in believing each of the propositions here maintained than the contrary. It is less difficult, for instance, to believe that the universe had an origin than to believe that it had not ; and so with the other propositions. And this is the only kind of proof the subject admits of. We have not attempted to *demonstrate* the existence of God, or to show that this hypothesis is free from difficulties ; but we have shown that, with all its difficulties, it is still by far the most probable hypothesis to explain the origin and present state of the universe. We therefore decide that the existence of God is *extremely probable*.

(C.) RECAPITULATION OF ARGUMENT.

In conclusion, we will very briefly repeat the main line of argument thus far. To begin with, in the present universe we observe a succession of changes. If these changes are not recurring, which seems incredible, they must have had a commencement ; and this is supported by the theories of Evolution and the Dissipation of Energy. And, therefore, as this commencement must have been voluntarily produced, the universe must be due to a *Free Force* somewhere. And a Free Force must be a *Supernatural Force*, since natural forces are not free, but always act according to some fixed law, while the unity of nature points to its being a *Single Supernatural Force*, which we called the Creator.

Next, it follows that the Creator must have fore-

known the consequences of His own action, judging by the marks of design which they present. And this conclusion is shown to be not incompatible with either the process of evolution or the existence of free will in man and other beings. And hence He must have been a *Personal Being*, possessing both Wisdom to design and Power to accomplish.

Or the whole argument may be repeated in an even shorter form. The universe as an *effect* must have had an adequate *Cause*. Since the effect shows a certain unity throughout, the Cause must have been One. Since the effect shows in some parts evidence of having been planned and arranged, the capacity for planning and arranging must have existed in the Cause. In other words, a universe showing marks of design is the effect, and nothing less than a Personal Being who designed it can be the Cause. And GOD is the name given to this Personal Being.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THAT MAN IS A FREE AND RESPONSIBLE BEING.

#### (A.) MAN'S MENTAL ATTRIBUTES.

Man possesses a mind as well as a body ; two objections, Idealism, scarcely ever held ; and Materialism, a possible theory, but it has enormous difficulties.

#### (B.) MAN'S MORAL ATTRIBUTES.

(1.) Man possesses a will.

(2.) And his acts are partly determined by his will.

(3.) This will is a *free* will.

(4.) Moreover, man knows that his will is free ; and this enables him to design, and makes him a personal being.

(5.) And therefore man is *responsible* for his acts, that is, for how he uses his freedom.

(6.) Man also possesses a moral sense ; which enables him to distinguish the quality of acts as right or wrong, and makes him a moral being.

(7.) While, lastly, man has a conscience, or direct means of judging of this quality in some cases.

#### (C.) DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANIMALS AND MEN.

There is great mental difference, though probably only of degree ; and entire moral difference, since animals do not seem to possess a *known* freedom, and are<sup>h</sup>ence not personal beings.

#### (D.) CONCLUSION.

Man's nature probably tripartite ; his unique position.

HAVING decided on the Existence of God, which is the fundamental truth of Natural Religion, we have next

to examine the probability of Revealed Religion, that is to say, of God's making some Revelation to man. And this will depend partly on the *character of man*—is he a being in any sense worthy of a revelation? And partly on the *Character of God*—is He a Being at all likely to make a revelation? The former question alone will be dealt with in this chapter, and we will consider man's *mental* and *moral* attributes separately. Nothing need be said about his bodily or *physical* characteristics, as they have no bearing on our present argument.

And it may be pointed out at starting, that as all science is based on observed facts, the science of Human Nature must be based on the observed facts of human nature, and not on any *a priori* reasoning as to what we think probable or the reverse. Moreover, in discussing human nature or anything else, we must of course argue from a perfect, and not from an imperfect, specimen. Savages and children are only imperfect specimens of humanity, and cannot be taken to represent the species.

#### (A.) MAN'S MENTAL ATTRIBUTES.

By these are meant man's thoughts and feelings. Now, that mental phenomena are different from bodily phenomena seems self-evident. Matter has size, weight, colour, shape, and hardness. Mind has the absence of all these. They have no conceivable meaning when applied to thoughts and feelings. And yet both mental and bodily phenomena exist in man. We each feel conscious that we have something which *thinks* and which we call mind; as well as something



which *moves*, and which we call matter, *i.e.*, our bodies. And from the nature of the case this inward conviction, or human consciousness, is all we can appeal to. For mind, if it exists at all, being by hypothesis different from matter, must be immaterial, and cannot therefore be discovered in the laboratory or by any scientific process.

And it must be remembered we possess no higher certainties than these *inherent convictions*, which form the basis of all our knowledge. Even the propositions of Euclid are only deductions from some other of our inherent convictions, such as that the whole is greater than its part. But still the difficulty of understanding this compound nature in man, part mind and part body, has led many to adopt one or other of two opposite theories, Idealism or Materialism.

The former theory, *Idealism*, may be dismissed at once, as it is scarcely ever held at the present day. It means that man has ideas, or mental phenomena only, and that there is no such thing as matter; the whole of our life being regarded as a mere dream. It is a consistent theory, but I have never met anyone who consistently maintained it.

The other theory, that of *Materialism*, is much more important. According to this there is no such thing as mind; what we call mental phenomena being merely very complex motions of the molecules of the brain. Now, that the mind and brain are closely associated together none will deny, but it does not follow that they are identical. The brain may be merely the instrument of the mind through which it acts. And

though, as far as we know, the mind can never act without the brain, it may certainly have a separate existence, and possibly, under different conditions, may be able to act separately. All we can say is, that within the range of our experience the two seem to be somehow connected together.

On the other hand, there are great difficulties in accepting Materialism. For mental phenomena must be either the peculiar property of such highly organized forms of matter as our brains, or else the common property of all matter. On the former hypothesis, the proposed explanation is no explanation at all. If water does not think or feel when it freezes, nor hydrogen when it burns, nor nitrogen when it combines with other elements, why should these and similar substances when united in a man have thoughts and feelings as well? To assert that this is so is no *explanation* whatever.

On the latter hypothesis, mental phenomena of some kind must exist in all matter, only in a very diluted form; so that the elements carbon, hydrogen, etc., do *to some extent* think and feel, and so also does the table at which I am writing, and the pen and ink I am writing with. And then when matter assumes the complex form of our brains, its mental phenomena become equally complex, and are what we call thoughts and feelings. This is no doubt a possible theory, but that is about all that can be said for it. There is no evidence whatever in its favour, and it is so difficult to believe as to be practically incredible.

Neither of these theories then can be accepted, and

we must abide by our inherent conviction that we have a mind as well as a body. This is an ultimate fact in human nature ; and we are as certain of it as we are of anything, though like some other ultimate facts it has to be assumed, because it can be neither proved nor doubted.

One further remark may, however, be made in regard to Materialism. This theory, to be consistent, must deny not only that man has a mind, but that he has anything immaterial at all ; he must be matter in motion, and nothing else. But this is disproved by our *memory*, which convinces us that we are the same persons now as we were ten years ago. And yet we know that every particle of our bodies, including our brains, has changed in the interval. We must then have something immaterial which survives, in spite of everything material changing.

The case, it should be noticed, is not parallel to that of a tree, which may be popularly said to be the same as it was ten years ago, though every particle of it has changed ; for as far as we know, the tree has nothing which connects its present state with its former state, it has no memory of what happened to it then. We *have*, that is just the difference. We can remember now what happened to us ten years ago. And yet our bodies now do not contain a single atom or molecule which they did then. We must, therefore, have something else besides atoms and molecules ; in other words, something *immaterial*, and if so, there is an end of materialism in its only logical form.

(B.) MAN'S MORAL ATTRIBUTES.

We pass on now to man's moral attributes, which may be thus analysed.

(1.) *Man possesses a Will.*

In the first place, man possesses a will. The chief reason for believing this is, of course, human consciousness. Man feels that he does possess a will which is distinct from his body and mind, though closely associated with both, and apparently to some extent controlling both. For example, I may resolve to raise my hand, and thereupon do it ; or I may resolve to think out a proposition in Euclid, and thereupon do it. In each case the will is felt to be something distinct from the succeeding bodily or mental action ; so that arguing from human consciousness—and we have nothing else to argue from—man possesses a will as well as a body and mind.

(2.) *Man's acts are partly determined by his Will.*

In the next place, a man's acts (and also his thoughts) are often determined by his will. By this is meant that a man's will is able to move his limbs, so that, for instance, he can raise his hand when he wishes, and this gives him the power of determining his acts. It is not, of course, meant that a man's will can move his limbs directly ; his limbs are moved by his muscles, which are directed by his nerves, and these are excited by motions in the brain. All that the will can do is to give a particular direction to these motions, which, in conjunction with various other forces, brings about the observed result.

Now we have in favour of this action of the human

will on the human body the universal experience of mankind, which is that a man can somehow or other move his limbs at pleasure. Indeed, the question whether a man can walk across the room when he wishes, seems to most persons to admit of a convincing answer : *solvitur ambulando*. But notwithstanding this, the action of will on matter seems so improbable, and so difficult to understand, that attempts have naturally been made to find some other explanation.

But no satisfactory one can be suggested. For the two classes of phenomena (wishing to move my body, and moving it) occur at or near the same time, so frequently and so universally, that there must be some connection between them. And therefore if the wish did not cause the material change in the body (originally in the brain), such as raising my hand, it must be the other way about, and some material change in the brain, which resulted in raising my hand, must also have caused me to wish to do so. There is no other alternative. Either the wish caused the material change, or else some material change caused the wish. And one theory is about as inconceivable as the other. We cannot imagine how an immaterial wish can cause, or even control, the motion of molecules of matter ; and still less can we imagine how the motion of molecules of matter can produce an immaterial wish.

There are, however, three arguments which tend to show that the theory of the will causing the material changes is the less improbable of the two. The first is that the will generally precedes the act : *e.g.*, I wish to raise my hand, and subsequently do it ; not I raise

my hand first, and subsequently wish to do it. This alone is not conclusive ; for as just said moving the hand resulted from certain movements in the brain, and these may have been previous to the wish, and possibly produced it, but the presumption is plainly the other way.

The second is from the process of evolution. For if the will is only the effect of material action and never its cause, it is clear that all the material actions might have gone on just as well without there being any will at all. But in this case it is almost certain that they would have done so, and that the will would never have been evolved ; since evolution cannot perpetuate and perfect what is useless, and a will that can never influence matter is from a material point of view quite useless.

The third is from the conservation of energy, for this would lead us to believe that the physical series of events in the brain is complete in itself. The energy developed is a physical force, and as such can be fully accounted for, and there can be no energy over to be turned into a wish, or anything else that is immaterial. These arguments then support—what to most persons scarcely needs supporting—the *daily experience of mankind*, which is that a man's will can, somehow or other, move his limbs, and hence determine his acts.

(3.) *Man's Will is free.*

It must next be noticed that man's will is a *free* will, and this is a most important point. It is quite distinct from the previous question. Then we decided that a man's raising his hand, for instance, was the result of his

wishing to do so. We have now to consider whether the wish was free on the man's part, or whether he could not help it; the latter view being called that of *Necessity* or *Determinism*, and meaning that a man's actions are necessarily determined and not free.

Of course, both the theories of Freedom and Necessity admit that a man's will is influenced by motives or reasons, and always acts in conformity with the strongest; in other words, that the prevailing motive prevails. But the difference between them lies in the ambiguity of this word *motive*. What are all the motives influencing the will? Are they only external, and such as are brought from without to bear upon the will; or are they partly internal, and such as the will may, but need not, evolve out of its own powers, or out of previously acquired materials? Moreover, is their strength of a uniform kind, so that they merely want combining, like physical forces, to yield a resultant? Or do they differ so widely that the will alone can decide as to what is their relative strength; whether, for instance, the motive to yield to some animal passion is stronger than that to sacrifice one's self for the good of others? The former view corresponds to the doctrine of Necessity, the latter to that of Free Will.

Now, strange to say, though the freedom of the will appears self-evident to most men, and is taken for granted in all human affairs, no absolute proof can be given of it. Everything can be consistently explained on the opposite theory. For, however much a man may think his choice is free, it can always be said that

he could not help deciding as he did. This is admitted. But, on the other hand, no proof can be suggested of the existence of free will which cannot be given. An absolute proof is, from the nature of the case, unattainable. We are thus obliged to judge by probability ; and there are two important arguments on each side.

Now the great argument in favour of free will is, of course, *human consciousness*. It is one of the most universal, and one of the most certain, convictions of mankind that he has free will. This conviction is forced upon him by his own daily experience. He feels, for instance, that he is free to raise his hand or not. And this conviction, resting as it does on the daily experience of the human race, cannot be upset by any mere *a priori* arguments showing that it is improbable, or that there are difficulties in understanding how a man's will can be free ; for in every case it is more likely that the premises of such reasonings are wrong, rather than the consciousness of mankind.

And the argument is strengthened when we consider that man's *belief* in his freedom, which is undisputed, must have had both a cause and a purpose. As to its cause, it is hard to see how, on the evolution hypothesis, the belief in human freedom, if untrue, could ever have been evolved. For if man were only an automaton, no amount of *believing* that he was free could alter his condition in the slightest degree, and therefore the belief would be utterly useless, and yet it has been not only evolved, but perfected to such an extent that it now forms an inherent part of human nature. And as to its purpose, it is hard to see why



God, Who has somehow or other created man, should have implanted in his nature an inherent conviction of falsehood ; indeed, to many this appears incredible. The argument, then, from consciousness alone seems conclusive on the subject.

But, as a matter of fact, this argument is amply confirmed by *human experience*. For experience shows that a man's conduct is variable and quite unlike the uniformity which we find in chemistry and physics where there is no free force, and everything is brought about in accordance with fixed laws. So that, for this reason alone, the existence of some free force in man to account for this variable conduct is not very unlikely. And if it be objected that human conduct, when considered as a whole, is not variable, since under the same circumstances most men will act in the same way, the inference against free will does not follow. For there is nothing unlikely in most men choosing to act in the same way ; and this does not at all resemble the uniformity of inorganic nature, where particles of matter always and invariably act in the same way. These, then, are the two arguments in favour of free will—human consciousness, confirmed by human experience ; and no more powerful arguments can be imagined.

On the other hand, the great argument against human freedom is that it would be an *anomaly* in nature. Everywhere else, it is said, we have an invariable sequence of cause and effect. Natural forces always act in the same way, and any free force, able to act or not as it likes, is absolutely unknown.

If, then, man possesses such a force, no matter how limited it may be, he is partly, at least, a *supernatural* being, not bound by fixed laws.

Now all this may be admitted, but what then ? Is it incredible that man should be a partly supernatural being ? Certainly not. For God, Who created man, is a Supernatural Being ; He possesses free will, and He might, if He thought fit, bestow some of this special attribute on man. No doubt, to persons who study physical science alone, the existence of any free force in man seems most improbable. But, on the other hand, to those who study the actions of men, such as barristers, judges, or politicians, the idea that man is a mere automaton might seem equally improbable.

And does not the same principle apply in other cases ? If a man were to study inorganic chemistry alone, living say, on an island where vegetation was unknown, would not a tree be a complete anomaly to him ? And yet trees exist and have to be allowed for. Chemistry has, in consequence, to be divided into two parts, organic and inorganic, and rules regarding the former are admitted not to apply to the latter. This is plainly the scientific way of treating the phenomenon ; and why should not the same method be adopted in regard to man ? He is found by consciousness and experience to have free will. This, then, must be admitted and allowed for. The forces we meet with in the universe have, in consequence, to be divided into two groups—those which are fixed, and those which are free ; the former including all the invariable forces of nature, and the latter the variable force which man possesses,

and which is called his free will. This may be an anomaly, but the evidence for it is overwhelming.

Moreover, the anomaly is greatly lessened by the fact that man already occupies a very anomalous position. Claiming free will for *him* is not like claiming free will for some mineral or plant. He is anyhow a unique being, incomparably the highest and most important on this planet; and that he should be partly supernatural as well is not so very unlikely after all.

While, lastly, we must remember that the whole idea of natural forces being invariable is only a deduction from our reasoning. And we know more about ourselves where we are conscious of freedom, than we do about the surrounding universe, where we infer this uniformity. Indeed, our own free will is the only force of which we have any direct knowledge, and the so-called forces of nature, such as gravity, are, strictly speaking, only assumptions which we make to account for observed facts. And as we have already pointed out, even these forces seem to have originated in the Free Will of the Creator; so that as far as we can judge, *volition* of some kind is the ultimate source of all force.

The other important argument against free will is that it would be inconsistent with the *Conservation of Energy*, since it is said any voluntary action would involve the creation of energy. But this is not the case; for the will might be free as to its actions, were it only able to control energy without producing it. And it could do this if it possessed the power of altering

either the time or the direction of force. By altering the time is meant freely choosing the time when an act should take place ; deciding, for instance, whether to raise my hand now or a minute hence. And by altering the direction is meant deciding, for instance, whether to raise my right hand or my left. And if the will possessed either of these powers, a free being would be like a reservoir of latent force, which the will could transform into actual motion when or how it pleased. And thus the will would be free as to its actions, without creating any energy at all.

We must therefore conclude, on reviewing the whole subject, that man's will is free, since this hypothesis alone agrees with the *consciousness* of mankind, and fully accounts for the *variability* of human conduct. While, on the other hand, though an *anomaly* in nature, it is not on that account incredible ; nor is it inconsistent with the *conservation of energy*.

(4.) *Man knows that his Will is free.*

Having now decided that man's will is free, little need be said about the next point, which is that man *knows* that his will is free, since, as we have shown, this is the chief argument for admitting its freedom. There are, however, many other arguments for proving that man believes that he has free will, for it is shown by his acts. It is this known freedom which enables a man to set before him an end, and deliberately work towards it ; in other words it enables him to *design*, and makes him a *personal being*, as the term is used in this Essay. And it is needless to point out that the evidence of human design is universal.

Again, human language affords a conclusive proof that man has always and everywhere believed himself to be free. For not only do such terms as *I will, I choose, I decide*, exist in all languages ; but these and similar expressions are so essential to conversation that it is even difficult for anyone to argue against free will without using terms which imply that he and his opponent are free. However, we need not pursue the argument, since it is undisputed that man believes that he has free will.

(5.) *Man's responsibility for his acts.*

We next come to man's responsibility. By this is meant that a man is responsible for the way in which he uses his freedom ; and this seems to follow at once from his knowing that he is free. Moreover, it is amply confirmed by human consciousness, for a sense of responsibility seems to be among the inherent convictions of mankind. Of course, there may be exceptions to this as to most other rules ; but taking mankind as a whole, he certainly believes in his responsibility.

And he also believes that this responsibility is primarily to God, or to some other supernatural Being. No doubt he is also responsible to his fellow-men, more especially to those among whom he is living ; but a moment's reflection will show that this is not the primary idea. For man must in the first place be responsible to his Maker rather than to his fellow-men. In the same way a child is first of all responsible to his parents, and then, secondly and consequently, to his brothers and sisters. And, therefore, because God has

made us, we are responsible to Him ; and because He has placed us among other men, and presumably wishes us to take some part in human society, we are in a lesser degree responsible to them also. So that the *brotherhood of man*, as it is called, is only a corollary from the Fatherhood of God.

(6.) *Man's moral sense of right and wrong.*

Next, as to man's moral sense of right and wrong. Now it is undeniable that mankind as a species possesses the very remarkable faculty of distinguishing the *quality* of acts which are free, and regarding some as right and others as wrong, the latter being called *sins*. And it may be noticed in passing, that the existence of moral evil or sin, which is unfortunately beyond dispute, seems to many to be an additional argument in favour of man's freedom ; for otherwise God must be the author of man's sin, which is almost incredible. Now we will call a being who is thus able to distinguish the quality of acts a *moral being*. Man is therefore a moral being, having this *moral sense*, as it is called, of distinguishing right from wrong.

It will perhaps make the meaning of this moral sense plainer if we compare it with one of man's other senses, say that of sight. The one, then, distinguishes right from wrong, just as the other distinguishes red from yellow, or green from blue. And as the fact of mankind possessing the faculty of distinguishing colours is not disproved by one man thinking a colour blue which another thinks green, and some individuals here and there being colour-blind or having lost their eyesight ; so the fact of mankind possessing a moral

sense is not disproved by one man thinking an act right which another thinks wrong, or possibly by abnormal specimens here and there not recognising any difference between right and wrong.

And it should be noticed, this sense of right and wrong is quite distinct from the pleasant or unpleasant consequences which are associated with certain acts. For instance, I may avoid putting my hand into hot water, because I remember having done so before, and that it was painful; but this is quite different from avoiding an act because it is wrong. It is also quite distinct from expediency, or the idea of benefiting by an act. For an act may not benefit us at all, or may even injure us, and yet it may be right. In short, "fifty experiences of what is pleasant or what is profitable do not, and cannot, make one conviction of what is right;" the ideas differ in kind, and not merely in degree.

(7.) *Man's conscience.*

Lastly, as to man's conscience. This is often confused with his moral sense, but the two are quite distinct, as a little reflection will show. For a man might possess a moral sense, and be able to classify acts as right or wrong, and yet have no direct means of knowing to which class any particular act belonged. He might have to work this out by reasoning from certain data; and in complicated cases we sometimes do so. But as a rule this is unnecessary. For mankind possesses a very remarkable *something*, called a conscience, which tells him intuitively, and without either argument or reasoning, that certain acts are

right and others wrong. Conscience is thus like an organ of the moral sense, and may be compared to the eye or organ of sight ; for just as the eye perceives that certain colours are red and others blue, so the conscience perceives that certain acts are right and others wrong. In each case the perception is almost instantaneous, and quite distinct from a deduction from reasoning.

Now that mankind as a species possesses a conscience is indisputable. It is shared alike by young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated. It has existed in all ages, countries, and races. We all have it ; and what is very remarkable it seems to be independent of our will, and not at our disposal. We do not correct it, but it corrects us ; for it not only tells us what is right and what wrong, but approves definitely of our doing the former, and disapproves just as definitely of our doing the latter. Indeed, one of the most striking effects of conscience is this feeling of remorse or self-condemnation after wrong-doing. And such a feeling is practically universal.

These, then, are the moral phenomena characteristic of the human race, and it follows at once that man is a *free and responsible being*. But as this conclusion is often objected to, because of the similarity between animals and men, and the difficulty of admitting that they also are free and responsible beings, or else of showing wherein the distinction lies, we must examine this subject.

#### (C.) DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANIMALS AND MEN.

Now the *bodily* difference between certain animals and men is admittedly small ; and if, as many think



probable, both were evolved from some common ancestor, it is plainly unessential. And though the accompanying *mental* difference is enormous, it is probably only one of degree, for the higher animals appear to possess the rudiments of a mind. So we must pass on to the *moral* characteristics of animals. Unfortunately our knowledge here must always be imperfect ; for unless some discoveries are made in the language of animals, we can know nothing of their consciousness, which is the basis of argument in regard to man. The following, however, appear to be the most probable conclusions.

To begin with, it seems likely that animals, or at all events the higher ones, such as monkeys, horses, and dogs, have a *will*, or something which corresponds to it ; that their actions are partly *determined* by this will, and that it is a *free* will. Of course, no proof can be given of all this ; but considering the variable conduct of animals, so unlike that of automata, and so like that of men possessing free will, it seems probable that they also possess such a will, though doubtless it is more limited.

Indeed, freedom to some extent may be the characteristic of all organic life, including both plants and animals. For variation, though slight, is universal. "No two trees in a forest, no two leaves on a tree, are exactly alike." And the whole theory of evolution is based on this very fact of variability, which is unlike any property of any part of inorganic nature ; while the term Natural Selection seems of itself to imply a power to select, or a free choice. It is not improbable,

then, that the unknown something which distinguishes living matter from dead matter may always involve a certain amount of freedom. But however this may be, it certainly seems probable that the higher animals possess a free will ; at all events, we are willing to admit it for the sake of argument. If anyone denies it, the objection as far as he is concerned falls to the ground at once.

But with regard to the next point of *known* freedom, not only is there no reason, except of course human analogy, for thinking that animals possess this, but there are strong reasons for thinking they do not. For it will be remembered the proof of man's known freedom does not depend solely on his consciousness. It is shown by his acts, for it enables him to *design*—*i.e.*, to work towards a foreseen end—and there is nothing corresponding to this in animals. For though many of their works undoubtedly show design somewhere, it does not appear to be due to them. This kind of unconscious designing is called *instinct*, and there are four reasons for thinking that it differs from real design implying forethought.

The first is, that it is by no means strongest in the most intelligent animals, such as monkeys, horses, and dogs. On the contrary, this kind of designing seems to decrease in the scale of animal life, just as real intelligence increases. And this is very remarkable, and of itself suggests that there must be some difference between the two.

The next is, that animals are only able to design in a few special cases. For example, a bird can construct

her nest admirably, but she cannot, or at all events does not, apply similar constructive genius to any other purpose. In the same way, a bee will build its hive on the most perfect mathematical principles, the three rhombs, which close the hexagonal prisms, having the exact angles so as to contain the greatest space with the least material.<sup>1</sup> But it cannot apply its mathematics to anything else. Similarly, a spider and its web, and many other instances, might be given. This makes it probable that such works are due to some special and particular cause, which is called instinct, and do not result from the animal's possessing a known freedom of action, which would enable it to design equally well in other cases.

And thirdly, this is confirmed by the fact that, if these works resulted from the design of the animals themselves, they must possess intellectual powers of a very high order. But this is quite untenable, since in other respects they act with the greatest stupidity. A bee, for instance, with all its mathematics, cannot very often, if it has flown in through an open window, retrace its way, but will buzz helplessly against another which is shut.

And fourthly, even in these few cases there is no gradual improvement in what the animal does. The last cell built by a bee is no better than the first, and no better, as far as we know, than cells built by bees thousands of years ago. The bee gains nothing by experience; it never makes an alteration by way of

<sup>1</sup> Encyc. Brit., 9th edit., vol. iii., p. 490. The angles are  $109^{\circ} 28'$  and  $70^{\circ} 32'$ .

improvement on what it did before ; whereas man, in consequence of his known freedom, is always trying to improve upon his previous works. Animals are thus like producers, who work by a rule given to them, and not like creators, who design for themselves, and profit by their previous experience. Plainly, then, an animal's instinct is born with it, and not acquired ; and therefore, any apparent design there may be in what is done by instinct cannot be attributed to the animal itself, any more than the design shown in its eyes and other organs, but to its Maker.

But it may be urged that in some of the higher animals, especially those in contact with man, we find certain acts which do seem to imply forethought and design. For example, a dog will bury a bone one day and go and look for it the next. But when once it is admitted that what are apparently far more striking instances of design are to be explained by instinct, it seems more probable that these are to be explained in the same way. On the whole, then, we conclude that though animals have, or may have, a free will, it is not a *known* freedom, because they are not able, like men, to *design*, and are hence not *personal beings*.

And this conclusion is strengthened by the fact that animals do not exhibit any of those phenomena which in man result from his known freedom. Thus they do not appear to have any idea of *responsibility*, any moral sense of *right* and *wrong*, or any *conscience*. Of course, it may be objected that as we punish a dog for doing what we dislike, it implies that we hold him responsible

for the act. But this does not follow. The punishment may only appeal to the dog's association of ideas. The dog, like other animals, has a natural impulse to avoid pain, and therefore it avoids the act which its memory associates with pain without necessarily feeling responsible for it, or considering it to be wrong. In the same way if we praise a dog for a good act he seems pleased ; but he is equally well pleased if praised for a bad act, which shows that it is the fact of being praised which pleases him, quite apart from any inward sense of having done right, or having deserved it.

These apparent exceptions, then, can be satisfactorily explained ; though even if they could not, they would be quite insufficient to outweigh the numberless instances on the other side. For in the vast majority of cases we never think of holding an animal responsible for its acts, or look upon its injuring anyone as a sin. We conclude, then, that *moral* phenomena form the great distinction between animals and men. Indeed, if animals, though free, are not conscious of their freedom, they cannot be said to have any moral character at all.

Two further remarks may be made before leaving this subject. The first is, that though there are difficulties in placing this known freedom as the difference between animals and men, there are as great, if not greater, difficulties in placing it anywhere else. If we say that an ape or a dog can design, the difficulty is not lessened ; it is merely transferred lower down the scale. Can a jellyfish design ? and if so, can an oak or a seaweed ? The momentous attribute of known

freedom, unless it is common to all life, which is most improbable, must begin *somewhere* ; and it seems less difficult to place it between animals and men than anywhere else.

The second and more important point is, that our ignorance about animals is no reason for doubting what we do know about man. To do this would be most illogical. Indeed, we might as well deny that a man could see, or hear, or remember, because there are difficulties in deciding where sight and hearing and memory commence in the scale of animal life.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

We may now conclude this chapter. With regard to man, it is clear that his bodily, mental, and moral phenomena belong to different classes, each being inexpressible in terms of the others. A man may be strong in body, and yet of weak intellectual power ; or, again, a man may have great intellect, and yet be of weak moral character. This makes it probable that his nature is really *tripartite*, the three constituents being best expressed as *body*, *mind*, and *spirit* ; the mind corresponding to the mental reasoning part of man, and the spirit to the free moral part. And as a man's body and mind are both under the partial and known control of his free will, or spirit, this latter must be looked upon as his essential self. Thus he is not strictly speaking an organism at all, but a free being served by organs both of body and mind. They are *his* ; they do not constitute *him*. He is the personal being, the free spirit conscious of its freedom, which controls both.

And our present conclusion is quite plain. We have shown that man is a *free* being, his freedom distinguishing him from all natural forces, and making him in part supernatural. And he is a *responsible* being, his responsibility being due to his known freedom, and distinguishing him from all animals. Or, to put it more concisely, his freedom separates him from inanimate nature, and his responsibility from the rest of animate nature. He has thus a unique position. Nothing else on this planet resembles him, and in his attribute of known freedom which enables him to design, and therefore makes him a *personal being*, he resembles God alone.

And if we assume that man, with all his marvellous attributes, has been evolved, together with other beings, from the earliest form of life on this planet, it seems only to increase his importance. Every other being is then brought into one grand series which leads up to man. He is the heir of all the ages, the inheritor of those thousands of useful adaptations which have been perfected by his long line of ancestors. And what is very important, organic evolution seems obliged to stop here. Man is not merely a link in a series leading on to still more perfect beings, but he is the *end* of the series. In all probability there will never be a higher being on the earth, for the causes which produced his evolution thus far have now ceased to act, and can carry it no further. As soon as man discovered the use of tools, there was an end to any further evolution of the hand. As soon as he took to wearing clothes, there was an end to the body becoming hardier

and stronger through exposure. As soon as he took to using weapons and inventing machinery, mere physical strength was no longer essential, and could no longer be increased.

In short, when Evolution began to take a *mental* turn, there was an end to bodily development. Henceforth there was to be no evolution of any higher species, but the gradual perfecting of this one species by mental and moral, and not physical improvements. Man is thus not only the highest being that has ever been evolved, but, as far as we can judge, the highest being that ever will be evolved on this earth. So that the vast scheme of evolution, inconceivable alike in magnitude, in duration, and in complexity, is seen to be one plan, with *man* apparently at the end of it.



## CHAPTER V.

### THAT GOD TAKES AN INTEREST IN MAN'S WELFARE.

#### (A.) THE EVIDENCE IN ITS FAVOUR.

Since God is a *Moral* as well as a Personal Being, He must be capable of caring for all His creatures.

- (1.) And He probably would do so, especially for man.
- (2.) While the marks of beneficent design seem to prove the point. But there is one great difficulty.

#### (B.) THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL.

- (1.) Physical evil in animals. The objection that it is vast in amount, wholly unmerited, and perfectly useless, cannot be maintained.
- (2.) Physical evil in man. Several ways of lessening the difficulty. Its explanation seems to be that God's designing evil does not mean His desiring it, as it is essential for forming a man's character.
- (3.) Moral evil in man. Also designed but not desired, as it is essential to free will; and wicked men are as necessary as any other form of evil.

#### (C.) THE PROBABILITY OF A FUTURE LIFE.

Several arguments in favour of this; and it may account for the unmerited suffering in this world.

#### (D.) CONCLUSION.

God's *Goodness* includes both Beneficence and Righteousness.

HAVING discussed in the last chapter the character of man, we have next to consider, as far as we have any means of doing so, *the Character of God*; more especially

whether He seems to take any interest in man's welfare. And we will first examine the evidence in favour of this; then the great argument on the other side from the existence of evil; and lastly, the probable explanation of the difficulty afforded by a future life.

(A.) THE EVIDENCE IN ITS FAVOUR.

To begin with, God is certainly capable of taking an interest in man's welfare, for He is not only a Personal Being, but also a Moral Being. This follows from what may be called the *moral argument* for the Existence of God, or that depending on man's free will. It is briefly this, that no combination of natural forces, which are uniform and always act the same under the same circumstances, can ever produce a *free* force, able to act or not as it likes. The idea seems inconceivable. If, then, man possesses such a force, which we have already admitted, it cannot have been derived from any natural forces, nor can it have made itself, so it must have come from some previous free force, and this, again, from a previous one, and so on till we finally arrive at an eternally existing *Free Force*. And this, it will be remembered, is precisely the conclusion we reached in Chapter I., though from quite a different argument.

Having admitted this, the next step is that this Free Force, or Free Being, must be conscious of His Freedom, and must therefore be a *moral* Being, able to distinguish the quality of acts as right or wrong. Indeed, the mere fact that man possesses this remarkable faculty makes it certain that man's Maker must do the same. For this faculty differs in kind

from all physical and mental faculties, and cannot therefore have been evolved from them alone. In other words, physical and mental forces can never by any possible combination produce out of themselves that which was never in them—the idea of right and wrong. So that a moral man implies a moral God. And this is amply confirmed by our *conscience*, which tells us we ought always to act right. But why to act *right*? The only possible answer is that this is the way in which God, who has given us our conscience, wishes us to act. But if so, it follows again that He must be a Moral Being capable of distinguishing the quality of acts.

Now a personal and moral God must certainly be able to take an interest in the welfare of His creatures; and, as we shall see, it is not only probable that He would do so, but there is abundant evidence that this is actually the case.

(1.) *The antecedent probability.*

In the first place, it is distinctly probable that God would care for all the beings whom He has created; or why should He have created them? And the probability that He would care for *man*, who, like Himself, is a personal and moral being, and whom He has thus endowed with some of His own attributes, is of course much greater. Moreover, we have no knowledge scientifically of any other being in the universe who is either personal or moral; so that, though man may be quite unworthy of God's care, we know of no other being who is more worthy of it. And it is scarcely likely that a Creator would not take

an interest in *any* of His works. While, as before said, if we admit the evolutionary theory of man's origin, and that the creation and perfecting of man is the goal towards which Nature has all along tended, it increases his importance tenfold ; and makes him seem more than ever the chief object of Divine care.

But an objection has to be considered arising from the *insignificance* of man. Though he is doubtless by far the most important being on this planet, and endowed with some of the divine attributes ; yet, after all, how utterly insignificant he is in comparison with his Maker. This is no new difficulty,<sup>1</sup> but modern science has increased its force by showing that our earth is but one member of the solar system, which again is itself a mere unit in the universe of stars. And is it likely, we may ask, that the God Who rules these millions of stars should take any interest in the beings on a small planet like our earth ?

But we may ask in reply, Is it likely that He should ever have designed and created such beings ? And yet He has done so. And having created them, there is at most only a slight additional improbability, if any at all, that He should take an interest in their welfare. Moreover, though science shows the *magnitude* of the universe, and that there are millions of stars, millions of miles apart, it shows also its *unity*, and that all its parts are closely connected together. And certainly the idea that the God, Who rules these stars, should take an interest in us men, is no harder to believe than that the gases which are burning in

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 8. 3, 4.

these stars should influence our spectroscopes. And yet they do. There is, of course, no reason why God should take any *special* interest in the beings on this planet, more than in similar beings on other planets, if such exist, which is extremely doubtful. But, since His capacities are boundless, there is a distinct probability that He would take an interest—and perhaps a great interest—in them all; for even an infinitesimal part of *infinity* may be very large.

And this *a priori* argument is confirmed by *observation*. For all through Nature we find nothing resembling a neglect of small things. On the contrary, everything, down to the minutest insect, seems finished with as much perfection as if it alone existed in the universe. True greatness does not consist in despising that which is small; and it may be a very part of God's infinite greatness that nothing should be too small for Him to care about, just as nothing is too large.

Moreover, we have no means of knowing what God considers large or small. "We can see the magnitude of matter, but we cannot see the magnitude of mind." God, however, knows both, and to Him a child possessing a mind and free will, and therefore made to some extent in His own image, may be of more value than a universe of dead matter. And, if so, what shall we say of the millions of men who have lived, and are now living on this earth? Surely *their* welfare cannot be considered unimportant by anyone, least of all by their Creator.

(2.) *The marks of beneficent design.*

We pass on now to the other argument arising from the marks of beneficent design. And here the evidence

seems overwhelming. Everywhere in nature, and especially in man, we meet with apparent marks, not only of design, but of *beneficent* design—that is, of design tending to the welfare and happiness of the beings in question. Take for instance the human eye, which we have already considered in Chapter II. As there shown, all its various and complicated parts agree in this one particular, that they all conduce to enable man to see. And the inference from this, that God, Who somehow or other brought all these parts together, did so with the intention of enabling man to see, is irresistible. And the further conclusion that God's object in thus enabling man to see, or at least the chief object, was to conduce to his welfare, is equally obvious. And the same applies to thousands of other organs throughout nature.

But there are two slight objections. The first is, that the human eye has some imperfections, in being liable to various kinds of disease and accident; and this is of course true. But these imperfections are incidental to the construction of the eye, and not the object of its construction. The eye was made to see and not to ache. That it does ache now and then is in all probability due to its being such an ingenious and complicated instrument, and therefore it scarcely affects the argument.

The other objection is, that beneficial organs like the eye, though they abound throughout nature, are not the only ones we meet with. There are others, like the claws and teeth of wild animals, which are just the opposite, and seem designed to give pain to

other creatures. But this is quite untenable. They were plainly designed to enable the animal to secure its food, and are perhaps necessary for that purpose, and they all tend to the welfare of their possessor. There is, in fact, no contrivance in nature the *object* of which is to produce pain.

We hence conclude, on reviewing the argument thus far, that God takes an interest in the welfare of all His creatures, more especially in that of man, who is, as far as we know, not only the most important of them, but the only one whom the Creator has made a personal and moral being, and thus in some respects like Himself.

(B.) THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL.

But now to consider the other side. The world, it is said, is full of pain and misery, and is not this fatal to its having been designed and created by a God Who cares for the welfare of His creatures? Or, to put the objection in other words, does not the existence of this evil, or indeed of any evil at all, using that word in its widest sense, to include both physical suffering and moral wrong, show that God either could not or would not prevent it? If He *could* not, he is not All-Powerful; if He *would* not, He is not All-Good. This is an undoubted difficulty; and, considering its importance, we will examine it in detail, both as it affects animals and men.

But it may be remarked at starting that the difficulty is common to all theories. For though the idea that all this evil is due to a *beneficent* God seems improbable, the opposite idea that the world was designed by a *bad*

Being, who wishes men to be miserable, is out of the question. Every happiness in life contradicts it. While the only other alternative, that the Supreme Being is *indifferent*, and does not care whether man is happy or miserable, seems also improbable, since He has Himself made us capable of feeling pleasure and pain, and keenly sensitive to both. And if this difficulty is urged as opposed to Theism altogether, or the existence of any Supreme Being, it must be remembered that though Theism may not account for it satisfactorily, neither Atheism nor Agnosticism can account for it at all. When considered by itself it leads towards Dualism, or the eternal existence of both a Good and an Evil Power. But the unity of nature is hopelessly opposed to such a view. Moreover, the difficulty, though great, is by no means insuperable.

(1.) *Physical evil in animals.*

The objection here is that animals of all kinds suffer a *vast amount* of pain and misery, which is wholly *unmerited* and perfectly *useless*; since, having no moral nature, they can neither deserve pain nor profit by it. We will consider these points in turn.

And first, as to the *extent* to which animals suffer. One animal does not suffer more because a million suffer likewise, so we must consider the suffering as it affects the individual, and not the total amount. And as to its extent we know but little. That animals appear to suffer greatly, *e.g.*, a mouse being caught by a cat, is obvious; but how far they really suffer is doubtful, as their feelings are far less sensitive than those of man. This is evident when we reflect that



suffering is connected with the brain, as is shown by the fact that savages suffer much less than civilised nations. And therefore we should expect animals, whose mental development is far less advanced, to suffer still less ; while the lower forms of life we should not expect to suffer at all.

And this is confirmed by observation, as several facts have been noticed which almost force us to this conclusion. For instance, a crab will continue to eat, and apparently relish, a smaller crab, while being itself slowly devoured by a larger one ; and this clearly shows that the crab can feel scarcely any pain, since the almost universal effect of pain is to destroy the pleasure of eating. And many other instances are known.<sup>1</sup> The only argument on the other side is that the bodies of the lower animals when ill-treated appear to writhe as if in great pain ; but in many cases there is certainly no pain at all. For instance, if a worm is cut in half, the tail end, just as much as the other, will writhe, though obviously it can feel no pain.

Moreover, animals, except domestic ones which are partly trained and civilised, appear to have no anticipation of suffering, and no power of concentrating their thoughts upon it, which increases it so greatly in man. And assuming, with reference to the above example, that the mouse is not to live always, its being destroyed by a cat is at most a very short misery, and perhaps involving altogether less pain than if it died from disease or gradual decay. On the whole, then,

<sup>1</sup> Transactions of Victoria Institute, vol. xxv., p. 257.

it seems probable that pain in the animal world is far less than is commonly assumed, and in the lower forms of life entirely absent.

Still it may be said this lessens the difficulty, but it does not remove it. For why should animals suffer pain at all? It is, as far as we can judge, wholly *unmerited*, since, having no moral nature, and therefore no responsibility, they cannot have done anything wrong to deserve it. But we must remember that if the pain which animals suffer is unmerited, the pleasure which they enjoy is equally so. The two must in all fairness be taken together. And it is probable that were there no capacity for pain, there would be no capacity for pleasure, since the same nervous system gives rise to both. And, as a matter of fact, animals seem to have a much greater amount of pleasure than pain. Their life is, as a rule, one of uninterrupted enjoyment, and probably, at any given moment, the number of animals of any species that are happy is incomparably greater than those that are miserable. In short, health and happiness is the rule, sickness and pain the exception.

Nor can it be said that pain is *useless* to animals; for though they have no moral nature to be improved, they have a physical nature to be preserved and transmitted, and the sense of pain may be essential to this. It is indeed a kind of sentinel, warning animals of dangers which might otherwise lead to their destruction. For example, if animals felt no pain from excessive heat, they might not escape when a forest was burning; or again, if they felt no pain from hunger,

they might die of starvation. And the same applies in other cases, so that pain is, in reality, a great *preservative of life*. We have, then, no sufficient reason for saying that the pain which animals suffer is useless; and with this the last and most important part of the objection falls to the ground.

(2.) *Physical evil in man.*

We now pass on to the case of man. We necessarily know a great deal of the suffering which he endures. The struggling lives, the painful diseases, the lingering deaths, not to mention accidents of all kinds, are but too evident. And it may be asked, would an Omnipotent God, Who cared for man's welfare, have ever designed all this?

Now it is important to remember that a great deal of physical evil originates in *moral* evil, which will be considered later on. By far the greater part of the pain and misery which men endure is probably brought about by their own wickedness and folly, or by that of their fellow-men. It is their doing, and not God's; and they alone must be blamed for it.

In the next place, many of the so-called evils of life do not imply any actual suffering, but merely an imperfection or absence of pleasure. For example, if a man loses the sight of one eye, he need not have any pain; and were he originally blind, the possession of even one eye would have been looked upon as a priceless blessing. But being always accustomed to having two eyes, having only one is now looked upon as an affliction. And the same argument applies in other cases. Again, however great may be the suffer-

ings of life, they cannot be as great as its joys, since nearly everyone wishes to go on living. And there is also a vast amount of *unconscious* happiness in the world, for men are so constituted that they may be happy (and as a rule are so) without knowing it: though no one can be *unhappy* without knowing it. While, lastly, it is undeniable that human pain, like that of animals, is most useful, serving to warn men of dangers and diseases, which would otherwise lead to their destruction.

Moreover, in a material world like ours, if the forces of nature act according to fixed laws, a certain amount of suffering seems inevitable. If, for example, the force of gravity always acts as it does, it will occasionally cause a tower to fall and injure someone. Such an event could only be avoided by God's continually interfering with these forces, or in popular language, working miracles. But this would render all human life a hopeless confusion. While at present, owing to these forces being invariable, a great deal of the evil which might otherwise result from them can be foreseen and avoided.

Thus we may say that human suffering, excluding that due to man himself, is by no means so great as it seems; that it is, as a rule, more than counter-balanced by human happiness; and that a certain amount seems not only useful, but in a world like ours inevitable. But though all these considerations are undoubtedly true, and undoubtedly lessen the difficulty, they do not remove it; since there is far more suffering in the world than can be thus

accounted for. The following appears to be the true explanation.

To begin with, though it is plain that God must have *designed* all this suffering when He originated the universe, there is no reason whatever for saying that He *desired* it. All we can say is, that as He foreknew all the results that would follow, He must have approved of the scheme as a whole, or He would not have started it. But He need not have approved of every item in it, for some of the items may be necessarily linked to some others of which He did approve, and could not possibly be separated from them. And thus, though He designed everything, He need not have desired everything, but may only have desired it as a whole. And therefore, as He seems not to have desired human suffering, and yet it exists, we can only conclude that there must be something else necessarily connected with this suffering, which He valued so highly as to more than counterbalance it.

Nor is it difficult to suggest what this *something else* may have been. For if there were no suffering in the world, there could be no fortitude, no bravery, no patience, no self-sacrifice for the good of others—nothing, in fact, that constitutes the highest type of man. In other words, a being such as a man can only be made perfect through suffering. And therefore this suffering implies no defect in God's design. It is a means, and, as far as we can judge, the only possible means for developing the highest and noblest character in man, such a character indeed as alone makes him worthy of admiration. And it should be noticed

a man's character can only be formed gradually, it cannot be given instantaneously. And therefore, if God wishes a man to have the special character acquired by constantly resisting evil, it can only be obtained by constantly giving him evil to resist.

Here, then, we have the most probable explanation of the physical evils which man endures. Their object is to develop and perfect his character; and as this is in itself a good object, and as it cannot be obtained in any other way, they may well have been designed by a beneficent God.

(3.) *Moral evil in man.*

But it may be urged that, even admitting the necessity and value of physical evils, these are greatly aggravated by *moral* evil—that is, by a man wilfully causing misery to himself and others—and might not this have been avoided? In other words, could not all *sin* have been excluded from the world? But assuming man to be a free being, it could not have been avoided, for freedom is always liable to abuse. In other words, if God decided that man was to be free in some cases to act right or wrong, then it necessarily follows that he may act wrong. No Omnipotence could possibly alter this without destroying man's freedom. And hence, though the Creator designed all the moral evil in the world, He need not have desired it, but may have desired some totally different object, for the attainment of which, however, the existence of this evil was a necessary condition.

Nor, again, is it difficult to suggest what this object may have been. For unless man is a free being, he

can be little better than a machine. And God may not have wished that man, who is, as far as we know, His highest and noblest work, should be merely a machine. Indeed, the superiority of free men who act right, though they might act wrong, to mere machines is obvious to all; and it may far outweigh the disadvantage that some of them should act wrong. So that the *infinite value of goodness*, as it is called, may justify, though nothing else could, the risks involved in the bestowal of free will.

Nor is there anything unlikely in the Creator thus caring about the conduct of His creatures. We certainly should not admire an earthly ruler who regarded traitors to his cause and his most faithful adherents with the same indifference; or an earthly parent who was unconcerned as to whether his children obeyed him or not. Why, then, should we think that God, Who has not only given us free will, but also a conscience by which to know what is right (*i.e.*, what is *His* will), should yet be indifferent as to whether we do it or not? Everything points the other way, that God, Who is a Moral Being, and Who has made us moral beings also, wishes us to voluntarily act right. And therefore of necessity He allows us to act wrong, with all its consequent miseries, in order to render possible our thus freely choosing to act right.

Or to put the argument in other words, a free being is far higher than a being who is not free, and yet a free being cannot exist without the possibility of his acting wrong. And, therefore, however strange the conclusion appears, moral evil, or at least its possi-

bility, is essential to the universe, if it is to be worthy of its Creator, if, that is, it is to contain beings of the highest order—*persons* and not *things*. Or, to put it still shorter, if God is good it is only natural that He should create beings capable of goodness, and therefore of necessity capable of badness, for the two must go together.

And if it be still urged that, as God foreknew how men would use their freedom, He need not have created those who would use it wrongly; in other words, there might be no *wicked men* in the world, the answer is obvious. Wicked men seem as necessary, perhaps more so, than any other form of evil to test a man's character. Moral perfection consists, partly at least, in being able to resist evil companions, and in daring to stand alone for an unpopular cause. And all this would be impossible if we had nothing but physical evils to contend with, and there were only good men in the world. The case then stands thus. Evil men are essential to an evil world. An evil world is essential to proving a man's character. Proving a man's character is essential to his freely choosing to serve God; and his freely choosing to serve God seems essential to his being such a servant as God would care to have.

One other point should be noticed before we pass on. It is that with regard to the conduct of free beings, *foreknowing* is not the same as *foreordaining*. God may have foreknown how a man would use or misuse his freedom, without foreordaining or compelling him to do either, since his conduct is by hypo-



thesis free. In the same way, in human affairs it is possible in some cases, and to some extent, to foreknow what a man will do, but without in any way foreordaining or compelling him to it. This is a most important distinction, and we have no reason whatever for saying that God foreordained any man to misuse his freedom, though He may have foreknown that he would do so.

But the most difficult part of the subject remains to be considered. It is, that the suffering in this world seems *unfairly distributed*, and does not befall different men in the proportion which they deserve. This is an undoubted and serious difficulty. For, as we have seen, God is a Moral Being, capable of distinguishing right from wrong; and as far as we can judge He is One who will always act right Himself. And yet His treatment of men in this world seems most unjust. Wicked men are allowed to prosper by their wickedness, good men suffer unjustly, and how is this to be accounted for?

(C.) THE PROBABILITY OF A FUTURE LIFE.

There is one and only one satisfactory explanation, which is, that this life is not the whole of man's existence, but only a *preparation* for a future life. It is a time in which to form his character; a short trial for a long hereafter. Nor is this idea unreasonable. For just as childhood and youth are a state of probation for mature age, so the whole of this life may be a state of probation for a future life. And just as the hardships and discipline of youth, such as a child's learning to read, are essential to enable it to share

in the higher and intellectual joys of mature age, so the discipline and trials of this life may be essential to enable us to share in the still higher joys of a future life.

Now, looked at from this point of view, the most apparently miserable lives may afford as valuable training, perhaps more so, than the outwardly happy ones. The temptation to dishonesty, for example, can be as well resisted by a poor man who is only tempted to steal sixpence, as by a rich man who is tempted to embezzle a thousand pounds. And if resisting such a temptation helps to form a man's character, as it certainly does, and hence, perhaps, to fit him for a better life hereafter, this can be as well done in the one case as in the other. And the same principle applies universally. So that if this life is intended as a time of probation in which to form a man's character, we cannot imagine a better system or one more admirably adapted to the end in view. No pain, then, can be looked upon as useless, and no position in this world as one to be despised ; in short, to anyone who believes in a future state life is always worth living.

Is, then, such a belief at all probable for other reasons ? Certainly it is ; since, in addition to the present argument, there are four others which are distinctly in its favour. The first is from man's *unique position*. For he is undoubtedly the highest and noblest being on this earth, and hence the most worthy of surviving permanently. And yet the human race cannot exist for ever as it is. Everything points

to this planet being sooner or later absorbed into the sun, when all forms of life must cease. And therefore, if man's spirit is not immortal, the vast scheme of Evolution which has been going on here for countless ages, and which has led up to man as its final end, will have had no permanent result. But if, on the other hand, man is immortal, and if this earth, with its strange mixture of good and evil, is a suitable place in which to form and test his character, and if perhaps God wishes hereafter to be surrounded by men who have stood the test, and have proved their fidelity to Him by enduring suffering for His sake; then its creation does not seem such a hopeless mystery as on the other theory. So that in the words of Romanes, "only by means of this theory of probation is it possible to give any meaning to the world, *i.e.*, any *raison d'être* of human existence."<sup>1</sup> Deny the immortality of man, and the whole of Evolution is robbed of its meaning, and the universe becomes a riddle without a solution.

The second argument is from man's *nature*. For he, as we saw in the last chapter, is a compound being, consisting of a free and partly supernatural spirit, which controls his body and mind. And what becomes of this spirit at death? We know what becomes of the body: the component molecules are rearranged in other groups, and the natural forces are transformed into other natural forces. Nothing is lost or annihilated. But what becomes of the spirit? If this is a free supernatural force, the idea that it should perish altogether when the accompanying natural

<sup>1</sup> Thoughts on Religion, p. 142.

forces are rearranged is most unlikely. The whole theory of the Conservation of Energy is opposed to such a view. But if it does not perish, it must survive as it is, for it does not seem to have any component parts into which it can be split up like a man's body. And we are thus led to believe in a personal immortality for man, though of course his spirit in the future life may or may not have corresponding organs of body and mind under its control. This is, anyhow, a probable conjecture ; it cannot be pressed further, for the question at once arises, How did man's spirit originate ?

The third argument is from man's *capabilities*. For he does not seem adapted to this life only, and has aspirations and longings far beyond it. His powers seem capable of continual and almost endless development. Nearly all men wish for immortality. This life does not seem to satisfy them entirely. For instance, men, especially scientific men, have a longing after knowledge which can never be fully realised in this world. A man's capacities are thus out of all proportion to his destiny, if this life is all ; and to many it seems improbable that the Creator should have endowed men with such needless and useless capacities.

And this is strongly confirmed by the analogy of nature. For example, a bird in an egg shows rudimentary organs which cannot be exercised so long as it remains in the egg ; and this of itself is a proof that it is intended some day to leave the egg. On the other hand, a full-grown bird seems, as far as we can judge, to be entirely adapted to its present state, and not to

have any longing after or capacity for any higher state; and therefore we may infer that no higher state is intended for it. And by the same reasoning we may infer that some higher state is intended for man, for his mental and spiritual nature are not entirely satisfied by his present life. In short, all animals seem made for this world alone, and man is the one unsatisfied being in the universe.

Moreover, the period of preparation in a man's life seems out of all proportion to the time prepared for, if death ends all. The development in a man's moral character often continues till nearly the close of his life. His character has then reached maturity. But for what is it matured? Surely not for speedy annihilation. Must not the wise Creator, Who designed everything else in the universe with such marvellous skill, have intended something better for His noblest creature than mere boundless capabilities, unsatisfied longings, and a lifelong preparation all for nothing?

The fourth argument is from man's *belief* in immortality. For such a belief has existed among men in nearly every age and country, learned and ignorant, civilised and uncivilised. It was implied by the Neolithic men who buried food and weapons with their dead, and it was maintained by such philosophers as Socrates and Plato, and how are we to account for it? It cannot have arisen from experience; and the attempts to explain it as due to the desire which men have for immortality, or to someone occasionally dreaming that he sees a departed friend, are quite inadequate. Desire is not conviction, and

dreams are notoriously untrustworthy. They might account for an individual here and there entertaining this belief, but not for mankind always and everywhere doing so.

The belief, then, seems intuitive and an inherent part of human nature; though, like other intuitive beliefs, such as that of right and wrong, it is more fully developed in some nations than in others, and may sometimes be entirely absent. What, however, makes it almost certain that it is intuitive is, that nothing but such a belief could have been strong enough to withstand the apparent contradiction afforded by every grave. And we may ask, is it likely that God should have implanted such a strange belief in man if it were erroneous?

These, then, are the five great arguments in favour of a future life—that derived from man's unique position, his compound nature, his vast capabilities, his inherent belief, and (what most concerns us at present) his unjust treatment in this world. And with the possible exception of the second, none of them apply to animals; so the common objection, that if man is immortal, animals must be so too, is quite untenable.

On the other hand, the great argument *against* man's immortality is that his spirit seems to be inseparably connected with his body. As far as we can judge, it is born with the body, it often inherits the moral character of its parents, just as the body inherits bodily diseases, it certainly develops and matures with the body, and in most cases it seems to gradually

decay with the body, and therefore it is inferred the two perish together.

But this does not follow ; for, as was shown in the last chapter, our memory alone proves that we have something immaterial which survives in spite of everything material changing ; and therefore it is not unlikely that this immaterial something (our spirit) may survive the still greater change at death. The body would thus be like the instrument of the spirit, by which it manifests itself in the outer world ; and hence, if the instrument gets out of order, its manifestations will become confused, but without implying that the spirit itself is so. In the same way, if we shut up a clerk in a telegraph office, as soon as his instruments get out of order, the messages he sends, which are his only means of communicating with the outer world, will become confused, and finally cease, but without implying that there is anything wrong with the clerk himself. And this is confirmed by the fact that instances are known in which a man's intellect and will have remained quite vigorous all through a mortal sickness, and up to the very moment of death ; so that the gradual decay of the body does not necessarily involve that of the mind and spirit.

On the whole, then, the idea of a future life is certainly not improbable, and, as before said, it removes the chief difficulty in regard to evil in this world. For, to put it shortly, man is a free and responsible being, able to act right or wrong, and therefore deserving of reward or punishment. And yet in this life he does not seem to be equitably dealt with. Good men often

suffer unjustly, wicked men are often prosperous ; and a future life, and a future life alone, can remove this difficulty.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

Our conclusion, then, in regard to the *Existence of Evil* is this. It is undeniable that God must have foreknown all the evil in the world when He originated it ; and in this sense He designed it. But He may also have foreknown, what we can only *foreguess*, that this evil is but temporary, and that it will lead to a more than compensating permanent good, which could not be obtained in any other way. God, it must be remembered, has eternity to work in, and His plan embraces the whole universe ; so it is not surprising that, with our finite knowledge, we do not altogether understand it. Suffice it to say, that we do understand it to some extent. We perceive that the evils in this world “ need not be *ends*, but may be only *means* to ends ;” and, for all we know, they may be the very best means for obtaining the very best ends. Indeed, as before said, they seem to be not only the best, but the only possible means for developing all that is highest and noblest in man. We conclude, then, that though God designed both the evil and the good in the world, He need not have desired both : and there are indications in nature sufficient to show that the good is what He desired, and the evil is only its inevitable companion.

This conclusion is often expressed by saying that *Goodness* is an attribute of the Deity ; and the term may certainly be admitted. For though it is doubtless



a very inadequate one, and does not fully express the reality, it is immeasurably nearer the truth than *badness*, or even *indifference* would be. But it is important to notice the sense in which it is used, and in which alone it is true.

By God's goodness, or by His taking an interest in man's welfare, is not meant a mere universal beneficence, or wishing to make everyone as happy as possible, irrespective of his conduct. The existence of evil seems fatal to such a theory as this. But rather God wishes to promote man's welfare in the truest and best way, not by gratifying every passing fancy, but by training and developing his character, so that he may be able to enjoy the highest form of happiness. God's character is thus not merely *beneficent*, but *righteous* also. And He therefore wishes man to be not only happy, but righteous also. And He therefore of necessity gives him free will, with the option of being unrighteous, and consequently unhappy. So that this view of God's character, combining beneficence with righteousness, not only accounts for the marks of beneficent design all through nature, but also for the existence of evil, especially moral evil, and seems the only way of reconciling these phenomena. In short, beneficence and righteousness are both good, and the Goodness of God includes both.

Now if we admit that goodness is an attribute of the Deity, the analogy from God's other attributes would show that He possesses it in its highest perfection; so that God is a Being not only of infinite *Power* and *Wisdom*, but also of perfect *Goodness*—the word

'perfect' being obviously more suitable to a moral quality like goodness than 'infinite' would be. And it will be noticed that these three great attributes of the Deity correspond to the three chief Theistic arguments. The first, that from causation, proves the existence of an All-Powerful Creator ; the second, that from design, proves that He is All-Wise ; and the third, that from human consciousness, proves that He is All-Good. They also correspond to some extent to the three aspects under which we considered man's character in the last chapter ; so we arrive at the grand conclusion that God is physically *All-Powerful*, mentally *All-Wise*, and morally *All-Good*.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THAT THEREFORE GOD MIGHT MAKE SOME REVELATION TO MAN.

A revelation is certainly possible.

#### (A.) ITS PROBABILITY.

- (1.) From God's character.
- (2.) From man's character ; since mentally he can understand it, and morally he can profit by it ; while he also desires it, and his unique position makes him not altogether unworthy of it.

#### (B.) TWO OBJECTIONS.

A revelation is said to be unjust, as only given to certain men ; and anyhow incredible unless quite convincing. But neither of these can be maintained ; so a revelation seems on the whole to be slightly probable.

WE decided in the last two chapters that man is a free and responsible being, and that God takes an interest in his welfare. We now come to the subject of a *revelation*, which we will define as any superhuman knowledge directly imparted by God to man. And by *superhuman* knowledge is meant any knowledge which man could not otherwise obtain ; such, for instance, as God's object in creating him, His wishes in regard to his conduct, or any past or future events of which he would otherwise be ignorant. And that

God could, *if He chose*, impart such knowledge either by visions, or dreams, or in some other way, can scarcely be disputed. Of course, we individually, never having received a Revelation, do not know what it would be like, just as a man who had always been deaf would not know what hearing was like. But to those who receive the Revelation in the one case, it may be just as convincing as to those who hear in the other. A revelation then is certainly possible ; but is it at all probable ?

(A.) ITS PROBABILITY.

Now from whichever side we regard it, a revelation appears to be *slightly probable*. For God is a Being, Who seems likely to give a revelation ; and man is a being pre-eminently suited to receive one ; so we will consider these points first, and then the chief objections to a revelation.

(1.) *The argument from God's character.*

Now since God is not a mere Force, but a Personal and Moral Being, Who takes an interest in man's welfare, we may infer that, if a revelation were beneficial to man, as it probably would be, it would be in harmony with God's character to confer it. For a *beneficent* God must be willing to make a revelation, just as an Omnipotent One must be able to do so. And considering that God is not only beneficent but *righteous*, and apparently wishes to train and develop man's character so that he may be righteous also, and perhaps with the idea of his living in some future state, then a revelation cannot be thought to be even improbable.

Moreover, as we have shown, man to some extent resembles God. Like Him, he is a personal and moral being, and, as far as we know scientifically, the only other being in the universe who is either personal or moral, so that he may be appropriately called a *child* of God. And God seems to care for his welfare, just as a human father would care for the welfare of his children. And it is certainly probable if a human father had children who had never seen him, but about whose welfare he cared a great deal, that he would send them some *message* : telling them about himself, and what he wanted them to do. And if we are in any sense God's children, and He really cares for our welfare, is it not likely that He would do the same ? Some would even push the argument further, and say that it seems *unlikely* for God to create a race of personal beings without holding some intercourse with them ; in the same way that it would be unlikely for a man to paint a picture without looking at it, or to arrange a concert without listening to it. For a personal being differs from all else in this very point, that he is capable of holding intercourse with other personal beings ; it is, so to speak, one of his distinguishing features, and therefore if God were to create such beings, it seems only natural that He should hold some intercourse with them.

And if we admit this, the whole idea of Evolution would tend to show that during the long period of man's infancy (what we now call palæolithic and neolithic times) when man was imperfect in every other respect, this intercourse would also be of the

most imperfect and elementary kind (what we now call Natural Theology in its rudest forms). While when man at length became sufficiently advanced to appreciate it, some actual Revelation might be given, which again might become more and more perfect, as man himself became more perfect. At all events, if this were the case, it would be in accord with God's methods in nature; and therefore God's character, *so far as we have any means of judging of it*, seems in favour of His making some Revelation—and that a *progressive* Revelation—to man.

(2.) *The argument from man's character.*

Passing on now to man's character, it must be noticed that he has been given a nature exactly fitted to receive a revelation. This can scarcely be disputed, for religion of some kind is, and always has been, practically universal; and (if we disregard the pre-historic times, as to which we have not sufficient information) all important religions have rested on real or pretended revelations from God, and have been accepted in consequence. Natural Theology *alone*, however noble its teaching, has never been able to influence the masses. Taking mankind as a whole, his nature has everywhere led him to seek for, demand, and, if need be, imagine a revelation from God. Nor is this surprising when we examine his nature in detail.

For, in the first place, man's mental character would enable him to *understand* and appreciate a revelation if one were given him, while his moral character would enable him to *profit* by it. For

man is not a mere machine, or a mere animal; he possesses a known freedom of action. And therefore, if God tells him what He wishes him to do, man can, if he chooses, do it. And since, as already shown, God seems to value man's conduct, a revelation which would influence him to act right, and yet without forcing him, and thereby destroying his freedom, is certainly not improbable. And that the knowledge alleged to be given by revelation might influence him in this way cannot be denied; for, as a matter of fact, such knowledge, either real or pretended, has had precisely this effect on millions of men.

But more than this, not only can man understand and profit by a revelation, but both mentally and morally he *desires* it. A thoughtful man cannot help wishing to know why he is placed in this world; why he is given free will; how he is meant to use his freedom; and what future, if any, is in store for him hereafter: in short, what was God's object in creating him. It seems of all knowledge to be the highest, the noblest, the most worth knowing. And therefore as this result of man's nature was not only brought about by God, but must have been foreknown, and intended by Him, it is not improbable that He should satisfy this craving of His own creating:—a craving which cannot be satisfied in any other way, for the knowledge is by hypothesis superhuman, and therefore out of man's own reach. And it may be added, the more we realise this, and feel that God is *Unknowable*, in other words, that we can gain no satisfactory knowledge about Him by human science and reasoning, so

much the more likely does it seem that He should give us such knowledge by revelation.

And all this is still further strengthened when we consider man's *unique position* on this earth ; more especially when we regard him as the last and noblest result of the vast scheme of evolution which has been in progress for so many thousands of years. For such a vast scheme, like everything else, requires a motive as well as a cause. And just as the consideration of its cause in the widest sense leads us to Natural Religion, so the consideration of its motive in the widest sense prepares us for Revealed Religion.

For however much evolution can explain, it cannot explain itself. Why should there have been any evolution at all ? Why should a universe of dead matter have ever produced life ? There must have been some motive in all this ; and what adequate motive can be suggested ? We can only look for an answer in *man*, who seems to be not only the highest product of the universe, but also a personal and perhaps immortal being ; so here is at least the possibility of a satisfactory answer. And if we admit that the creation of man is the chief object the Creator had in view for so many thousands of years, it does not seem unlikely that He might wish to hold some communication with him. Or, to put it shortly, the whole of nature, as we have seen, evidences design or purpose ; and man, as we have seen, occupies a special and unique place in nature. Therefore, presumably God has some special purpose in regard to man, and, for all we know, may have something special to tell him about it.



We conclude then that man's mental and moral character, and the unique position he occupies on this earth, is a strong argument in favour of his receiving some revelation from God.

(B.) OBJECTIONS TO A REVELATION.

But now for the other side. There are two chief objections to a revelation. The first is on the ground of *injustice*. It is said that any revelation would imply a partiality to the men or nation to whom it was given, and would therefore be unjust to the rest of mankind. But this is quite untenable, for God's other benefits are not bestowed impartially. On the contrary, pleasure and pain, good and evil, are never equally distributed in this world. Partiality and apparent favouritism is the rule throughout, and this without any seeming merit or demerit on the part of the men concerned. Moreover, the advantages of a revelation may not concern this world only; and all who believe in a future life are convinced of God's equity, and that men will only be judged according to the knowledge of God's Will which they possessed, or might have possessed had they chosen, and not according to any higher standard which was out of their reach.

The other and more important objection is, that if God gave a revelation at all, it would be absolutely *convincing*. Everything that God does He does well; and we cannot, it is urged, imagine His making a revelation to man, and yet doing it so imperfectly as to leave men in doubt as to whether He had done it or not. For this would imply that He either could not, or would not, make the evidence sufficient to ensure

conviction, neither of which is credible. And this objection is strengthened by human analogy. For we cannot imagine a wise parent sending a message to his children, and yet doing it so imperfectly that many of them doubted whether the message really came from him.

Now, although all this seems very probable, a moment's reflection will show that it is not conclusive; for exactly the same may be said in regard to the whole of Natural Religion. Is it likely, for instance, that God should create free and responsible men, and yet give them such insufficient evidence about it, that while many are fully convinced, others deny not only their own freedom and responsibility, but the very existence of the God Who made them? And yet He has done so. And therefore there is nothing improbable in the evidence for a revelation, if one were given, being of a similar character.

Indeed there is much to be said in favour of its being so, since in most other matters man is left a free choice. He is often able to find out how he ought to think and how he ought to act, but he is not forced to do either. And God may have wished that the same rule should be followed in regard to a revelation, and that man should be left free to believe it or not, just as he is left free to act on it or not if he does believe it, and just as he is left free to choose right or wrong in other cases. And therefore we cannot say that no revelation can come from God unless the evidence for it be overwhelming. It would doubtless be sufficient to convince a man if he took the trouble to examine it

carefully ; only it need not be such as to compel conviction. What kind of evidence we may expect will be considered in the next chapter.

Neither of these objections, then, can be maintained, and we are forced back to the conclusion that a revelation seems for several reasons slightly probable. To put it shortly, if God is good and really cares for man's welfare, it seems unlikely that He should withhold from him that knowledge which is the highest, the noblest, and the most longed after ;—the knowledge of Himself. While, if man is really a free and partly supernatural being occupying a unique position in the world, it seems unlikely that he should be told nothing, and therefore know nothing, as to why he was created or what is his future destiny. Thus when we consider both God's character and man's character, it seems on the whole to be *slightly probable*, that God should make some revelation to man, telling him how he ought to use his freedom in this world, and possibly what future is in store for him hereafter.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THAT THEREFORE A MIRACULOUS REVELATION IS CREDIBLE.

A Divine messenger would probably have credentials.

(A.) SUPERHUMAN SIGNS.

These include superhuman *knowledge*, afterwards verified (e.g., prophecies), and superhuman *coincidences*; and there is nothing incredible in either.

(B.) SUPERNATURAL SIGNS, or Evidential Miracles.

These are 'marvels specially brought about by God for the purpose of attesting a revelation.' This definition is threefold, referring to their outward aspect, cause, and purpose.

- (1.) As *Marvels*: though they appear to be contrary to experience, they are not really so, for we have no experience of the proper kind to refer to.
- (2.) As *Special Works of God*: they only interfere with the uniformity of nature in the same way that human works interfere with it.
- (3.) And as *Signs*: there is nothing to show that they are inconsistent with God's Character. Conclusion.

WE decided in the last chapter that it was slightly probable that God might make some revelation to man, that is to say, to certain men, for them to make known to others. Now, it would obviously be desirable that these men should have some means of showing that the knowledge had come from God and not from them-

selves. It is not meant that this accompanying evidence is in any way necessary to the revelation, but merely that it is somewhat probable. In other words, if God sends a message to man, it is somewhat probable that the messenger would have *credentials*. And this is especially so when we remember that men have often appeared in the world's history who professed to have a revelation from God, and have misled mankind in consequence. Is it not probable, then, that if God really did give a revelation, He would take care that His true messengers should have credentials which would distinguish them from the impostors?

These credentials, then, or *signs*, must obviously be such as could not be forged by man, and must therefore of necessity be *superhuman*, if not *supernatural*. So we may divide them into these two classes; and we have now to consider whether such signs are *credible*. By this we mean something more than merely possible; for the possibility of miracles follows at once from the existence of God. But are they credible? is there, that is, at least a very slight probability of their occurrence?

#### (A.) SUPERHUMAN SIGNS.

These include, to begin with, superhuman *knowledge*, which can be afterwards verified, such as *prophecy*. And there is no difficulty here, provided we admit a revelation at all. The only possible objection refers to prophecies regarding human conduct; which it may be said would interfere with man's freedom. But this is only part of the more general objection that any foreknowledge on God's part would interfere

with man's freedom, which has been already considered in Chapter II. ; and there is no special difficulty in regard to prophecies. In every case, as said before, God merely foreknows the use man will make of his freedom.

Superhuman *coincidences* form another, and very important class of superhuman signs. In these a man's acts or sayings are attested by natural phenomena *coinciding* with them in a remarkable manner. For example, suppose a prophet claimed to have a revelation from God, and, as a proof of this, invited the people to witness a sacrifice on a cloudless day. He then killed an animal, and placed it on an altar of stones, but put no fire under it, and even threw water over it. Suddenly, however, a heavy thunderstorm arose, and the sacrifice was struck by lightning. Now the thunderstorm might have arisen and the lightning might have struck on that particular spot, in strict accordance with natural laws; and yet the *coincidence* of this occurring just when and where the prophet wanted it, would tend strongly to show that God, Who must have foreknown and designed the coincidence, meant to corroborate what the prophet said.

Or, to put the argument in other words, the lightning would seem to have struck the sacrifice *on purpose*; and therefore such events have been popularly described as *natural forces acting rationally*. Of course, as a rule, the forces of nature do not act rationally. A falling meteorite, for instance, does not go a yard out of its way to kill anyone or to spare him. Man, on the other hand, does act rationally. His acts are directed for a purpose, and thus evidence design.

And, with the events we are considering, the forces of nature seem also to act with a purpose, and this raises a strong presumption that the Author of these forces was really acting with this purpose. In short, the events seem to have been not only superhuman, but *designed coincidences*.

And they present no difficulty whatever from a scientific point of view, for they are by hypothesis part of the ordinary course of nature. And God might have arranged at the origin of the universe, or subsequently, so as to bring about the events just when and where He wanted them to attest any human acts or sayings, the foreknowledge of which He also possessed. Of course, the value of such coincidences varies greatly according to whether the event is of a usual or unusual character. In the latter case, more especially if the event is very unusual or the coincidence very striking, they are popularly called miracles. And they may have considerable value, though there is always a slight chance of the agreement being, as we might say, accidental.

(B.) SUPERNATURAL SIGNS.

We now pass on to supernatural signs or *Evidential Miracles* in the strict sense, which we will define as *marvels specially brought about by God for the purpose of attesting a revelation*. This definition has, of course, been framed to suit the miracles recorded in the Bible, and it is really three-fold. In the first place, an evidential miracle is described as to its *outward aspect*. It is a marvel—that is to say, it is an unusual and extraordinary phenomenon, which we cannot account

for, and which thus attracts attention. Secondly, it is described as to its *cause*. This marvel is said to have been specially brought about by God—that is to say, by some action on His part different from His usual action in nature. While, lastly, it is described as to its *purpose*; it is a marvel brought about for the purpose of attesting a revelation.

The first of these aspects is expressed in the Old Testament by the word *wonder*, the second by such phrases as God's *mighty hand* or *outstretched arm*, and the third by the word *sign*; all these terms being often used together.<sup>1</sup> While in the New Testament the three words used are *wonders*, *mighty works*, and *signs*, which again exactly correspond to these three aspects.

And it should be noticed these aspects are not chosen arbitrarily, since other events can and ought to be looked at in the same way, not merely as phenomena, but also with reference to their alleged cause and purpose. And with regard to miracles, it is just these elements of cause and purpose which may make the marvels credible. And each is equally important; for a miracle without a sufficient purpose would be morally incredible, just as one without a sufficient cause would be mentally so. We will now consider these points in turn.

(I.) *Miracles as marvels.*

The first aspect of evidential miracles is that of marvels. As such, they are events which seem to be *contrary to our experience*—contrary, that is, to what our experience of apparently similar events would lead

<sup>1</sup> E.g., Deut. 6. 22; 7. 19; 11. 2.



us to expect. Suppose, for instance, it were stated that on one occasion three men were thrown into a furnace, but instead of being burnt to death they walked about, and in a few minutes came out alive and unhurt.

Such a marvel would be contrary to our experience, and that it would be therefore improbable is obvious. But is this improbability sufficient in all cases to make the event incredible, no matter what testimony there may be in its favour? Hume's argument that it is sufficient is well known. He says that we can only judge of the probability of anything, whether it be the occurrence of an event or the truthfulness of the narrator, by *experience*; and that as it is contrary to experience for miracles to be true, but not contrary to experience for testimony to be false, the balance of probability must always be against the miracle.

But of course, if true, this reasoning must apply to all alleged events which are contrary to experience. And yet such events are not only credible, but have occurred by the thousand. Let us take a single example. All mankind have had some experience as to how far it is possible to hear the human voice distinctly, and till recent years this has invariably fixed the limit at a few hundred yards at most. Now, suppose anyone was told for the first time that it was possible to speak right across England, he would justly say that it was utterly contrary to experience; but ought he to add that it was therefore incredible?

From this it is clear that there must be some flaw in Hume's argument. And on examination it is

easily discovered. For the argument views the event only as a marvel, and *without reference to its alleged cause*. But we have no right to leave this out of account, nor do we in practice. When anyone first hears of a marvel, he does not merely compare it with his previous experience, and then come to a decision ; in which case, as Hume supposes, it might be always against the marvel ; but he first inquires how, and under what circumstances, this strange event is said to have been brought about. For if any cause is alleged to have been at work of the influence of which he knows nothing, then he has no experience of the required kind to appeal to. There is the testimony in favour of the event as before ; and if he disbelieves it, he does so, not because it is contrary to his experience, but because he thinks the supposed cause either did not exist, or would not have had the effect asserted.

A reference to the previous example will make this quite plain. The man, when he first heard of persons talking right across England, instead of at once declaring it incredible, would, if a reasonable man, inquire as to the *cause* of this. He would then be told that a wire was stretched across England with an instrument called a telephone at each end. Now, as to the possibility or adequacy of such a contrivance he might doubt a good deal ; but one thing would be quite clear, that this was a case to which his experience, however large, did not apply. The instant the wire was mentioned, *whether he believed it or not*, that instant the event was taken out of the range of his experience altogether.

This, then, is the explanation of Hume's argument. So long as a marvel, contrary to experience, is regarded *only* as a marvel, the probability must be always against its truth. But if we inquire as to the agency by which it was brought about, and find that some special cause is alleged, as to the influence of which we are ignorant, then the argument is no longer applicable. We have simply no experience of the required kind to appeal to.

Now this is precisely the case with regard to evidential miracles. As marvels they seem contrary to experience ; but they claim to have a *special cause*, to be specially brought about by God—that is to say, by some action on His part different from His usual action in nature ; and of the influence of this cause we have no experience whatever. We may, of course, deny its existence or doubt its adequacy ; but the argument, as contrary to experience, vanishes.

It is clear then that the fact of evidential miracles seeming to be contrary to experience is no reason for disbelieving *them*, though it might be a reason for disbelieving other alleged marvels, because they claim to have a special cause wherewith to account for this special character. So we have now to examine whether this special cause really existed—that is to say, we pass on to the second aspect of the miracles ; our conclusion thus far being that they are credible as *marvels*, if it be credible that they were *specially brought about by God*.

(2.) *Miracles as special works of God.*

Now, any special action on God's part is often thought to present great difficulties, as interfering

with the uniformity of nature. But it would only interfere with it in the same way that human action interferes with it. Neither of them violates the laws of nature, though both are able to bring about results which nature of itself would not have brought about.

In the case of human action this is quite obvious. Suppose, for example, a clock with an iron pendulum is placed on a table and keeps perfect time. Suddenly, without anyone touching it, it begins to gain rapidly, and then, after an hour or so, goes on as before. To anyone unacquainted with the cause, this would appear a *marvel* : and might even be thought to be incredible, as (assuming the clock to be properly constructed) it would seem to imply some alteration in the laws of motion, or the force of gravity. And yet we know a man can easily produce such a marvel by simply holding a magnet under the table. The disturbing cause, it will be noticed, was not really the magnet, which always acts according to law ; nor the hand which held it ; but the action of the *human will* on matter. This took place in the man's brain, and gave a particular direction to some nerve-force, which enabled the man to move his hand, and hence the magnet.

Now, evidential miracles claim to have been brought about in a somewhat similar, though to us unknown, manner by the action of God's Will on matter ; and, if so, their credibility under this head must be admitted. For we know that God has the power of acting on matter, and that He used it at least once in originating the universe, so He might use it again if He thought

fit. Indeed, the creation seems the greatest of all miracles, and of itself renders any other possible. Moreover, God's knowledge of the laws of nature is complete, whereas man's is only partial. As then, man, with his limited power over nature and partial knowledge of its laws, can produce marvels out of nature's ordinary course, and yet without violating any of its laws ; still more can God, Who has complete power over nature, and complete knowledge of its laws. For to deny this would be to deny to God the power which we concede to man.

And if it be objected that man can only do this through his having a material body, the answer is obvious. The action of the will on matter takes place in the brain, and the body is only a natural link in the chain of cause and effect, and so does not affect the analogy. No doubt we cannot imagine how God can exert His Will over matter, but neither can we imagine how we can do it ourselves. The difficulty is as great in the one case as in the other.

From this it is clear that evidential miracles do not necessitate God's violating natural laws. And though at first one might be inclined to dispute this with regard to individual miracles, the statement is quite justified, provided we make due allowance for our own ignorance. Take, for example, the supposed case of the men in the furnace. This might be thought to violate the laws of heat, which necessitate a man's body being consumed in such circumstances. But it does nothing of the kind. For even if we admit that a man's body must be kept below a certain temperature

to sustain life, we cannot say that this was impossible in the furnace. For extreme heat, and even extreme cold, may be very close together, as is shown by the well-known experiment of freezing mercury inside a red-hot crucible. As a mere marvel this is quite as wonderful as the men in the furnace ; and an ignorant man would probably pronounce both to be equally incredible. Of course, in all marvels produced by *man*, we know the special cause at work, and can repeat it experimentally ; but this very fact prevents us from saying that in a miracle, merely because we do not know it, the laws of nature must be violated.

Or, again, to take another example, suppose it was said that on one occasion a few loaves were miraculously increased so as to feed some thousands of persons ; could we say that this must have violated natural laws ? Certainly not, for bread is composed of the elements carbon, oxygen, etc., and these were in abundance all around. And though we only know one way in which they can be formed into bread, which is through the agency of a living plant, we cannot say that this is the only method. There is nothing incredible in organic substances, including bread, being made in the laboratory some day. Such illustrations do not of course show *how* God worked the miracles ; they merely prevent us from saying that He could not have worked them, had He chosen, without violating natural laws.

It will thus be noticed that evidential miracles do not claim to be brought about by any action on God's part different in kind from how ordinary events are brought about, for each is produced in conformity with natural

laws, and each is due originally to the action of God's Will on matter. Only, in the one case there is or may be an immense number of intermediate natural links, and in the other comparatively few. And hence it follows that all events are in a certain sense both natural and supernatural. They are natural as regards the mode in which they are brought about, and supernatural as regards the Original Cause which brings them about ; so that the cause of the natural, if we go far enough back, is always supernatural.

And very possibly we need not go back at all, for there is much to be said in favour of the theory of God's *immanence* in nature, which means that all natural forces are due to the present and immediate action of God's Will. And this seems to have been the view taken by the writers of the Old Testament, for all natural phenomena, even the formation of clouds and rain, and the growth of grass, are ascribed to God in the same way that miracles are.<sup>1</sup> They did not therefore recognise any sharp distinction between the natural and the supernatural, but looked upon them all as God's works. In other words, the Divine *immanence* in nature, which modern science is beginning to realise, seems to have been known instinctively to the Jews. And if this theory is correct, it greatly lessens the difficulty as to miracles.

But in any case there is, as we have shown, nothing incredible in the way in which evidential miracles are said to be *caused*, provided it is credible that God should wish to use His power over nature in the

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Ps. 104, 147.

assumed manner. And this leads us to the third aspect of the miracles ; for whether God would wish to act in a certain way depends of course on what *purpose* He had in doing so.

(3.) *Miracles as signs.*

Now, evidential miracles are said to be brought about *for the purpose of attesting a revelation* : so that whatever importance may attach to any of them on other grounds, their chief value is asserted to be as *signs* of a revelation. And therefore as we have already shown that it is credible, and perhaps slightly probable, that God might make a revelation, we have now only to inquire whether evidential miracles are suitable means for attesting it. And they appear to be the most suitable means possible ; for they would both attract men's attention to the revelation, and also convince them of its superhuman character ; and these are precisely the two points required. While their extraordinary character in the physical world would correspond with that of revelation itself in the mental world, which has been called a kind of mental miracle.

It may still be objected that God's character, as indicated by nature, is *Unchangeable* ; and that therefore it is most improbable that He would at times act in a special manner with regard to natural phenomena. And the more nature is studied the stronger does this objection appear, since there are thousands of cases, such as storms and earthquakes, when it seems to us that a slight interference with the course of nature would be highly beneficial to man, and yet it never occurs. Or the objection may be otherwise expressed



by saying that a miracle would reflect on either the Wisdom or Power of God, since, if All-Wise, He would have foreseen the occasion, and if All-Powerful, He would have provided for it ; so that any subsequent interference with nature is something like having to remedy a fault.

This is no doubt the most serious objection to miracles, but it is by no means insuperable. In the first place, it rests to a great extent on our ignorance, or at most partial knowledge, of God's character. For had we only our own sense of the fitness of things to judge by, we should never have thought that God would have created such a world as ours at all. The existence of evil, and that innocent men should suffer for guilty ones, are events we should have thought most unlikely ; and yet they occur every day. If, then, we are incompetent to decide beforehand how God would be likely to govern the world in an ordinary manner, we must be still more incompetent to say whether, under special circumstances, He might not deviate from this manner. And we must remember God is a Free Being, Who does not *always* act the same, even under the same circumstances (Chapter I.) ; so there is nothing improbable in His acting differently under different circumstances. Moreover, the objection is directly opposed to the analogy of the only other personal being we know of, which is man himself. A man may, as a rule, act uniformly, and yet on some special occasion, and for some special reason, he may, and often does, act differently ; and why should not God do the same ?

Secondly, in the case before us, it is even probable that He would do so, since the chief object of the miracles could not have been obtained by the ordinary course of nature, though their immediate effects might have been. For example, instead of healing men miraculously, they might be healed naturally; but then there would be no evidence that the healer was sent by God, and was speaking in His name. In short, the messenger would be without *credentials*; and, as we have already shown, this seems unlikely.

Thirdly, though evidential miracles do not show God's unchangeableness in the same manner as the unchanging course of nature, they are not inconsistent with it. For they are not asserted to be *after-thoughts* with God, but to have been planned from the very beginning. And if He foresaw that at certain periods in the world's history events would arise which, in order to carry out His purpose, could be best dealt with in some special manner, and therefore determined that when these events arose He would deviate from His usual way of working, this would involve no inconsistency or change on His part.

While, lastly, there may be some *other* attributes of God which evidential miracles show, and which the ordinary course of nature does not show; such as His condescension in giving them at all. One object of a revelation might be to convince man that God really cared for his happiness and valued his affections. And there is nothing incredible in supposing that, to attest such a revelation as this, God might condescend to manifest Himself more after a human manner, and to

act, not with the uniformity of nature, but more as a man would act, in order that man might the more readily understand Him. Thus, to answer the objection in one sentence, God is *All-Good*, as well as *All-Wise*, and *All-Powerful*; and His Goodness might induce Him to use miracles, though by His Wisdom and His Power He might have dispensed with them.

We may now sum up the present argument. We showed that evidential miracles are credible both as *marvels* and as *special works of God*, if it be credible that they were brought about *for the purpose of attesting a revelation*. And we have now shown that, on the supposition that God might make a revelation, which we have already admitted, there is nothing inconsistent with His character as far as we know it, and therefore nothing in the slightest degree incredible, in His using evidential miracles, as one of the means of attesting its truth. On the whole, then, we conclude that a Miraculous Revelation is certainly *credible*. Whether one has ever been made will be discussed in the following chapters.

## PART II.

### *THE JEWISH RELIGION.*

CHAP. VIII. THAT THE JEWISH RELIGION IS CREDIBLE.

„ IX. THAT ITS ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION WAS DIVINELY  
REVEALED.

„ X. THAT ITS ORIGIN WAS ATTESTED BY MIRACLES.

„ XI. THAT ITS HISTORY WAS ATTESTED BY MIRACLES AND  
PROPHECIES.

„ XII. THAT THEREFORE THE JEWISH RELIGION IS PROBABLY  
TRUE.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### THAT THE JEWISH RELIGION IS CREDIBLE.

#### (A.) INTRODUCTION.

Objection that the ordinary reader cannot judge of the evidence in favour of the Jewish and Christian religions, because it is historical, and can only be understood by specialists ; while many specialists have decided against it. But this is quite untenable.

#### (B.) THE JEWISH RELIGION.

- (1.) Its partiality to the Jews ; but any Revelation must be more or less partial.
- (2.) Its miracles ; but these present no great difficulty, if miracles at all are credible. Many of them are only superhuman coincidences, such as the *silence* of the sun and moon, and the passage of the Red Sea. Two objections.

#### (A.) INTRODUCTION.

WE decided in the previous Part of this *Essay* on\*the Existence of God ; and that it was credible that He might make a miraculous revelation to man. Before passing on to the Jewish and Christian Religions, both of which claim to be such revelations, a preliminary objection of some importance has to be examined. It arises from the fact that the arguments connected with these Religions are to a great extent *historical* ;

and depend on the authenticity and truthfulness of various books of the Bible. And, therefore, it is urged, they can only be understood by *specialists*, and for the ordinary reader to try and examine them is mere waste of time. While it is notorious that many critics, who have devoted their whole lives to the study of these books, have decided *against* their authenticity.

Now of course the evidence in favour of any Revelation must be to a great extent *historical*, but it is a mistake to suppose that in consequence it can only be understood by *specialists*. No doubt a man who is a thorough scholar in Hebrew and Greek, which the present writer does not profess to be, and has spent years in studying the Bible, is best able to weigh the arguments for and against its authenticity. But, as will be seen later on, most of the arguments are of such a kind as can be readily understood by the ordinary reader. And even in other cases it is not, as a rule, the actual facts which are disputed, but only the inferences to be drawn from them, as to which the ordinary reader can often judge for himself.

But it is further urged that many critics, who have devoted years to the study of these very books, have decided *against* their authenticity; and how, it is asked, could anyone do this, if the evidence in their favour is very strong? And if it is not, why should we believe them? This is the real objection, and fortunately there is a complete and satisfactory answer.

And the answer is this, that the chief critics who

deny the authenticity of the books of the Bible are all *Rationalists*, that is to say, men who reject the supernatural altogether. A miracle is to them *incredible*. Trustworthy testimony to it is of course equally so, and hence those books of the Bible which, if authentic, would contain such testimony, must of necessity be not authentic. This principle has been admitted, either directly or indirectly, by all the leading writers of this school, such as Baur and Strauss in Germany, Rénan in France, and the author of "Supernatural Religion" in England, some of whom state it with surprising candour.

Thus *Baur* says, "The main argument for the later date of our Gospels is, after all, this—that they, one by one, and still more collectively, exhibit so much out of the life of Jesus in a way which is impossible," *i.e.*, miraculous, as the context clearly shows.<sup>1</sup> Here it will be noticed the foregone conclusion that miracles are impossible is made the chief argument for saying the Gospels which record them are not authentic.

Next as to *Strauss*. He expresses his agreement with critics who adopt "the fundamental conviction that everything that happens, or ever happened, happened naturally; that even the most distinguished of men was still man; and that consequently the supernatural colouring in the accounts of early Christianity must be adventitious and unreal." Again he says, "In the person and acts of Jesus no supernaturalism shall be suffered to remain." And quite consistently he declares that none of the Gospels can be truly and

<sup>1</sup> Critical Enquiry as to the Gospels, Tübingen, 1847, p. 530.



fully historical, "for the simple reason that they contain supernaturalism."<sup>1</sup>

Passing on to *Rénan*, he is equally precise, for though he denies that a miracle is impossible, he certainly considers it incredible. His words are, "Till we have new light, we shall maintain, therefore, this principle of historical criticism, that a supernatural relation cannot be accepted as such, that it always implies credulity or imposture, that the duty of the historian is to interpret it, and to seek what portion of truth and what portion of error it may contain. Such are the rules which have been followed in the composition of this *Life*." Again he says, speaking of the Gospels being in part legendary, "That is evident, since they are full of miracles and the supernatural."<sup>2</sup>

So, again, the author of "*Supernatural Religion*." He says, speaking of miracles, "There are the strongest reasons for affirming that such phenomena are antecedently incredible." And again, "Both the supernatural religion, therefore, and its supernatural evidence labour under the fatal disability of being antecedently incredible."<sup>3</sup>

It seems needless to give further quotations from less distinguished writers; but it may be pointed out that the principles here enunciated are consistently applied by these critics, not only to the books of the Bible as a

<sup>1</sup> Strauss, *New Life of Jesus*. Authorised translation. London, 1865, pp. x, xii, 34.

<sup>2</sup> *Rénan's Life of Jesus*, translated by Wilbour. New York, 1864, pp. 44, 45, 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Supernatural Religion*, 2nd edit., 1874-77, pp. 78, 94.

whole, but to every miraculous or superhuman event they record.

For example, *Rénan* says, speaking of St. Luke's Gospel, "The date of this Gospel may, moreover, be determined with much precision by considerations drawn from the book itself. Chapter xxi., inseparable from the rest of the work, was certainly written after the siege of Jerusalem, and soon after (vv. 9, 20, 24, 28, 32). We are here, therefore, on firm ground."<sup>1</sup> Here, it will be noticed, *Rénan* argues that the apparent prediction of the fall of Jerusalem in Luke 21 makes it *certain* that the Gospel was written after that event; while the strong marks of genuineness contained in this very chapter merely induce him to date it as soon after as possible. So again, the author of "Supernatural Religion," speaking of Christ's resurrection, says, "The belief that a dead man rose from the dead and appeared to several persons alive, is at once disposed of upon abstract grounds. The alleged occurrence is contrary to universal experience."<sup>2</sup>

These quotations, which are mere samples of numbers that might be given, show clearly that the rejection of the supernatural is the basis from which these writers start. But to assume that miracles and predictions are incredible, and that therefore authentic evidence to them is equally so, is to give up the critical and historical argument altogether. We do not of course mean that historical and critical objections are not relied on at all. They are to some extent; but they are more

<sup>1</sup> *Rénan's Life of Jesus*, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Supernatural Religion*, vol. iii., p. 522.

like *excuses* than *reasons*, the real reason for disputing the books being in every case an antecedent objection to the miraculous events recorded. And then, starting with this, they search for any slight evidence that can be found, either critical or historical, for proving it. Such a method of arguing has been happily described as *a conclusion in search of its premises*; and it is needless to add that, in a case of this sort, premises of some kind are generally found.

Under these circumstances we need not discuss further the objection that many specialists have decided against the authenticity of the books of the Bible. Fortunately their opponents, who maintain the genuineness of these books, can afford to lay aside all arguments founded on their own views as to the supernatural, and rely only on critical evidence.

(B.) THE JEWISH RELIGION.

We pass on now to the Jewish Religion, and in this chapter we will examine whether the religion is *credible*, and if so, we will consider later on the evidence for and against its being *true*. Its chief doctrines, as recorded in the Old Testament, are that at some early period God selected Abraham and his descendants as His own special people; that He revealed to them His Will in various ways; that He delivered them miraculously from bondage in Egypt; and that as long as they obeyed Him, He continued to help and instruct them, often using miracles, either to confirm His revelation, to protect His servants, or to destroy their enemies.

Now, that such a religion seems improbable for many reasons scarcely needs to be pointed out; but is

it incredible? Many will at once answer that it is because of its alleged *partiality* to the Jews, and its miracles; and we will consider each subject in turn. There are also certain moral difficulties, which will be examined in Chapter XII.

(I.) *Its partiality.*

The objection here is that God is the just God of all mankind, and it is incredible that He should have selected a single nation to be His special favourites, more particularly since His alleged attempt to make them a holy people proved such a hopeless failure; while the very fact of the Jews believing Jehovah to be their special God shows that they regarded Him as a mere national God, bearing the same relation to themselves as the gods of other nations did to them.

But, as said in Chapter VI., any Revelation implies a certain *partiality* to the men or nation to whom it is given; but it is not therefore incredible. And there is certainly no reason why the Jews should not have been the nation chosen, and some slight reason why they should; for their ancestor Abraham was not selected without a cause. He did, partly at least, deserve it, since, judging by the only accounts we have, he showed the most unbounded confidence in God in leaving his home in Haran, and the most implicit obedience to God in his willingness to offer up Isaac; and such confidence and obedience may well have deserved a blessing. It must also be remembered that God's so-called partiality to the Jews did not imply any indulgence to them in the sense of over-

looking their faults. On the contrary, He is represented all along as blaming and punishing them, just as much as other nations, for their iniquities.

Next, as to God's purpose in regard to Israel having been a *failure*. This is only partly true. No doubt the Israelites were, with many bright exceptions, a sinful nation ; but they were not worse than, or even so bad as, the nations around them ; it was only the fact of their being the chosen race that made their sins so heinous. They had free will, just as men have now ; and if they chose to misuse their freedom and act wrong, that was not God's fault. Moreover, Israel was not selected merely for its own sake, but for the sake of all mankind. This is expressly stated at the very commencement, '*In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*'<sup>1</sup> And this strange promise has certainly been fulfilled ; for however sinful the nation may have been, they preserved and handed on God's revelation, and the Old Testament remains, and will always remain, as a permanent and priceless treasure of religion.

The last part of the objection, that God's alleged selection of the Israelites shows that they believed their Jehovah to be only a national God, may be dismissed at once, as it proves precisely the opposite. For if Jehovah *selected* Israel to be His people, He must have had a power of choice, and might, if He pleased, have selected some other nation, and therefore He could not have been a mere national God, but the God of all nations, with power to select among

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 12. 3.

them. And this is distinctly asserted by many of the writers.<sup>1</sup>

We conclude, then, that God's partiality to the Jews is not so very unlikely as to make their religion incredible. To put it shortly, if a revelation is given at all, some individuals must be selected to receive it ; if it is given gradually, as it doubtless would be (for God's methods in nature are always those of gradual development), these men must in all probability belong to a single nation ; and if one nation has to be selected, there is no reason why the Jews should not have been the one chosen ; while, if they were selected for the purpose of handing on God's revelation to the world at large, the purpose has been completely successful.

(2.) *Its miracles.*

We pass on now to the Jewish Miracles, including under that term both Superhuman Coincidences, as well as Evidential Miracles in the strict sense. Some of them no doubt seem improbable, but they can scarcely be thought incredible, *provided miracles at all are credible*, which we have already admitted. And of course the Superhuman Coincidences present no scientific difficulties at all. Among these may be mentioned the destruction of Korah, the falling of the walls of Jericho, probably due to an earthquake ; the lightning which struck Elijah's sacrifice ; several cases of recovery from sickness ; and many others, including some which appear at first sight to be strictly miraculous. We will consider a couple of examples of the latter class.

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Deut. 32. 8 ; 2 Chron. 20. 6 ; Isa. 37. 16.

*The 'silence' (or standing still) of the sun and moon.*<sup>1</sup>  
—This is often thought to involve an entire dislocation of the solar system, due to the earth's rotation being stopped, thus causing the sun and moon to apparently stand still. And it is justly urged that a miracle on so vast a scale, even if possible, is quite out of proportion to the end in view, which was merely the slaughter of a few Canaanites. But there is another, and far more probable explanation of the miracle.

It is that instead of being one of prolonged light, the sun remaining visible after it should have set, it was really one of prolonged darkness ; the sun, which had been hidden by thick clouds, being just about to shine forth, when it was commanded by Joshua to be *silent*, *i.e.*, to remain obscured behind the clouds, which it did during the rest of the day. The Hebrew appears to be capable of either meaning. For the crucial word translated *stand still* is literally *be silent* (see margin), both in verses 12 and 13 ; and while this is very applicable to the sun's remaining obscured by clouds during the day, it could scarcely be used of its continuing to shine at night.

On the other hand, the rest of the passage seems to favour the ordinary view. But as it is a quotation from the poetical book of Jashar (now lost), a certain amount of figurative language must be allowed for ; and several of the words are capable of more than one meaning. Moreover, if we admit that this is what Joshua *commanded*, that the sun and moon should remain *silent* or obscured, the rest of the passage can

<sup>1</sup> Josh. 10. 12-14.

only mean that this is what took place. (*E.g.*, Sun and moon be obscured . . . and the sun was obscured, and the moon *stayed* or ceased, must mean that the moon ceased *shining*, not that it ceased moving, but went on shining.) And it may be mentioned that, as early as the fourteenth century, the Jewish commentator Rabbi Levi ben Gershon maintained that the words did not mean that the sun and moon *stood still*, or in any way altered their motion, though it is only fair to add that this was not the general view.<sup>1</sup>

Assuming, then, that either meaning is possible, a prolonged darkness is much the more probable for two reasons. To begin with, Joshua is more likely to have wanted it. We read that just before the miracle there had been a very heavy thunderstorm, involving thick clouds and a nearly black sky; and this is stated to have been the chief cause of the enemy's defeat. And hence it is plain that Joshua is more likely to have asked for a continuance of this storm, *i.e.*, for prolonged darkness, than for light. Indeed, as the miracle must have occurred in the early *forenoon* (Gibeon, where the sun was, being to the S.E. of the battlefield, and Ajalon, where the moon was, to the S.W.), it is scarcely conceivable that Joshua, with the enemy already defeated, and nearly all the day before him, should have wished to have it prolonged. Secondly, the moon is mentioned as well as the sun. Now, if Joshua wanted darkness, the shining of either would be prejudicial, so both would naturally have been ordered to be *silent* ;

<sup>1</sup> Numerous quotations are given in *A Misunderstood Miracle*, by Rev. A. S. Palmer.



but if he wanted light, the mention of the moon is quite unnecessary, since when the sun is shining the moon's light is insignificant.

On the whole, then, the miracle seems to have been a superhuman coincidence between certain words of Joshua and an extraordinary and unique thunderstorm, which caused both the sun and moon to remain *silent* or invisible all day ; a coincidence, however, so remarkable, that, if true, it would have considerable value. And if the Canaanites were sun-worshippers (as many think probable), there was a peculiar fitness in the sun being obscured the whole day, and it would naturally lead to their utter confusion.

*The passage of the Red Sea.*—This also appears to have been a superhuman coincidence. The water, we are told, was driven back by a strong east wind, lasting all night.<sup>1</sup> And this was doubtless due to natural causes, though, in common with other natural events, it is in the Bible ascribed to God. And the statement *the waters were a wall unto them* need not be pressed literally as meaning that the waters stood up vertically ; but merely that they enclosed the Israelites on each side like a wall, and thus secured them from flank attacks. And as (considering their immense numbers, see chap. x.) they must have advanced in several parallel columns, probably a mile wide, this certainly seems the more likely view.

And what makes it still more probable is that a somewhat similar phenomenon has been observed in this very neighbourhood in recent times. For in

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 14. 21.

January, 1882, a large expanse of water, about 5 feet deep, near the Suez Canal, was subjected to such a strong gale from the east (the very direction mentioned in Genesis), that next morning it had been entirely driven away, and men were walking about on the mud where the day before the fishing boats had been floating.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, on this theory, the miracle would not lose any of its evidential value, since the fact of such a strip of dry land being formed just when and where the Israelites so much wanted it, and then being suddenly covered again (perhaps due in part to the rising tide), would be a coincidence far too improbable to be accidental.

We have lastly to consider two general objections which may be taken to the Jewish miracles. The first is that some of them were of a very *trivial* character, such as Elisha's healing the waters of Jericho, increasing the widow's oil, and making the iron axe-head to float;<sup>2</sup> and hence it is urged they are most improbable. And no doubt they would be, if we regard them merely as acts of kindness to individual persons; but if we regard them as so many signs to the people that Elisha was God's prophet, and that God was not a far-off God, but One who knew about and cared about their every-day troubles, they are certainly not inappropriate. Indeed, if this was the end in view, they were precisely the kind of miracles most suited to attain this end.

<sup>1</sup> Transactions of Victoria Institute, vol. xxviii., p. 267. It is vouched for by Maj.-Gen. Tulloch, who was there on duty at the time.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 2. 22; 4. 6; 6. 6.

The other and more important objection strikes at the evidential value of all the miracles. They could not, it is urged, have really attested any revelation from God, since the writers who describe them also describe other miracles, wrought, they say, in opposition to God's agents and for the express purpose of discrediting the revelation. I have not met with a satisfactory explanation of these *diabolical miracles*, as they are called; and if such events were of frequent occurrence in the Bible, they would form a great difficulty. But this is not the case. If we exclude some doubtful instances, such as the raising of Samuel by the witch of Endor, and some general statements about the powers of evil being able to perform marvels, there remains only one instance in which we have any detailed facts to judge by.

This is the case of the magicians of Egypt, who imitated some of the earlier miracles of Moses and Aaron, such as the turning of rods into serpents and the plague of the frogs. But even here the inference is doubtful, for we are expressly told that this was due to their *enchantments*, a term which might very possibly cover some feat of jugglery; and the fact that they tried and failed to imitate the next plague, which they frankly confessed was a Divine miracle, makes this a very probable solution.<sup>1</sup> Of course, the earlier miracles which could be thus imitated by jugglery have no evidential value; but this does not concern us at present. And even if we assume that the writer meant that the Egyptians were assisted by supernatural powers, the passage is at most little more than a

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 7. 11; 8. 7, 18, 19.

*one-text* difficulty, and cannot be said to imply that a belief in diabolical miracles was a part of the Jewish religion.

We decide then that none of the difficulties discussed in this chapter are sufficient to render the Jewish Religion *incredible*, though they no doubt render it *improbable*, and therefore strong evidence is required to make us accept it. Whether there is such evidence or not we have now to examine.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THAT ITS ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION WAS DIVINELY REVEALED.

#### (A.) MEANING OF THE SEVEN DAYS.

Apparent difficulties on both sides ; but they disappear if the word *Day* is understood as a *Representative Term*, showing the insignificance of the time of creation in regard to God. Some additional reasons for this view.

#### (B.) GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CREATION.

- (1.) Its pure Monotheism ; admittedly true.
- (2.) Its gradual development ; admittedly true.
- (3.) The method of creation ; each stage being due to a creative impulse from God ; probably true.

#### (C.) DETAILED ORDER OF CREATION.

- (1.) Origin of the universe.
- (2.) Earliest state of the earth.
- (3.) Creation of Light, on first day.
- (4.) The Firmament, on second day.
- (5.) The Dry Land, } on third day.
- (6.) Vegetation, }
- (7.) Sun and Moon, on fourth day.
- (8.) Fishes and Birds, on fifth day.
- (9.) Land Animals, } on sixth day.
- (10.) Man, }

#### (D.) CONCLUSION.

The points of agreement with science are both many and striking.

THE first argument we have to consider on behalf of the Jewish Religion is that afforded by the opening

chapter of Genesis. It is urged that this account of the Creation, no matter when or by whom it was written, must have been *Divinely revealed*, since it contains a substantially correct account of events which could not have been otherwise known at the time.

What then we have to examine is, whether this narrative is nearer the truth, as we now know it from geology and other sciences, than the unaided guesswork of a man ignorant of these sciences might be expected to be. Fortunately, in the ancient narratives of Babylonia, India, Persia, and elsewhere, we have abundant evidence as to how far from the truth such guesswork is likely to be. It is scarcely too much to say that they are one and all entirely false, except where they agree with Genesis. And if we admit revelation at all, there is nothing improbable in some account of the creation of the world having been revealed to man very early in his history, and being accurately preserved by the Jews, while only distorted versions of it occur among other nations.

(A.) THE MEANING OF THE SEVEN DAYS.

And first we must consider somewhat carefully the meaning of the days of creation. Now, if the word *day* is used of a period of time, in Scripture as elsewhere, it has but two meanings—a period of twenty-four or of twelve hours. It is indeed often used in a vague indefinite sense as the *day of judgment* or the *day of the Lord*. But here there is no idea of duration, and we might just as well say the *hour* of judgment or the *time* of the Lord. In no case does the word *day* of

itself denote a long period of time. And yet, on the other hand, ordinary days would have been impossible before the formation of the sun on the fourth day, and the writer must obviously have known this. Indeed, he implies it himself, since he expressly assigns the division of time into days and years to the sun.

How then are we to reconcile all this? The only satisfactory solution is that the word *day* must be understood as a *Representative Term*, relating to God. And therefore, God's *days* must be interpreted in the same manner as God's *eye* or God's *hand*; and this removes all difficulties. By a representative term is meant a term which is not, strictly speaking, true, but which represents the truth to man in such a way that he can approximately understand it. For example, the phrase that God gained the victory *by His own right hand* clearly means that He gained it not with the assistance of others, nor with the help of weapons, but simply by His own unaided inherent strength. It was such a victory as might *in a man* be described as gained by his own right hand. God's acts are thus represented under the figure of those acts of men which most nearly correspond to them in character. And on the same principle we interpret the passage, *The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers*, and hundreds of others which occur all through the Bible. We do not assign any new meaning to the actual words themselves, such as hands, eyes, and ears; but we say that all such terms, when applied to God, are mere descriptions drawn from human analogies, which cannot be pressed literally.

And in the present case it is extremely probable that the word *day* is to be understood in the same sense ; for representative terms abound all through the narrative. From God's word of command calling forth light at the beginning to His rest at the end, everyone must admit that the expressions used are not, strictly speaking, true, but merely represent the truth about God in a way which man can understand. We have hence no more right to suppose the six days to be literal days than to suppose that God literally spoke or literally rested. What we are to suppose is that God created all things in such periods of time as might *to man* be most fitly represented by six days. Vast as the universe was, and various as were its inhabitants, man was to regard it as being to God no longer or more arduous task than a week's work to himself. In short, the time of creation, however long in itself, was utterly insignificant in its relation to God ; to *Him* each stage was a mere day.

Further, if need be, to support this view, we may notice three points. The first is that it is not a purely modern theory, made to reconcile the narrative with science ; for the Greek Jew, Philo, born about B.C. 20, whose ideas were not influenced by geology, ridicules the idea of the days of Genesis being literal, or representing any definite periods of time.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the Israelites quite understood that human measures of time, when applied to God, were not to be taken literally. Thus we are told that a thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday ; and elsewhere we read,

<sup>1</sup> Works of Philo Judæus, Yonge's translation, 1854, vol. i., p. 52.



‘Hast thou eyes of flesh, or seest thou as man seeth? Are thy days as the days of man, or thy years as man’s days?’<sup>1</sup> Here *days* and *years* are applied to God in precisely the same manner as *eyes* and *seeing*, which everyone admits are representative terms only. Nor is the Fourth Commandment, that in *six days the Lord made Heaven and earth, etc.*, in any way opposed to this view. For *days* are not the only things it mentions, but also *work* and *rest*. Now none will deny that God’s work is quite different from man’s work, and His rest from man’s rest; so why should not the days of His work be also different from the days of man’s work?

Lastly, there does not seem any reason why, if literal days were meant, a total of *seven* should have been selected, rather than eight or any larger number. For if the Creator only rested twenty-four hours, what did He do afterwards? And if He continued to rest, would it not have been just as true to have selected a total of twelve days, and say that God worked for the first six and rested the second six? On the other hand, if the days represent indefinite periods of time, the choice of seven is easily explained, since we are still in the seventh day or period, to which, be it remembered, no evening is assigned, and the Creator is still resting. And this is of course quite correct; for nothing has occurred since the appearance of man, which requires any fresh creative act.

Any contradiction, then, between Genesis and geology as to the time of creation is plainly impossible;

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 90. 4; Job. 10. 4, 5.

for their teaching is of a different kind. The one tells us, or may tell us, the time of creation in regard to man, as measured by years and centuries ; the other tells us the insignificance of this time in regard to God. And therefore, as has been well said, there is only one way in which the discoveries of science can affect this subject. By the help of science we may obtain a truer conception of the real dimensions and marvellous constitution of the universe, a truer idea of the enormous lapse of ages during which it was being elaborated to its present perfection ; thus obtaining also a truer idea of the eternal greatness of Him to whom the whole of this vast work seemed but as one week's labour.

(B.) THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF CREATION.

We pass on now to some general principles which are stated or implied in the narrative, and which are of great importance.

(1.) *Its pure Monotheism.*

And first as to its pure Monotheism. This alone renders it almost, if not quite, unique among similar narratives. According to the writer, the whole universe, including sun, moon, and stars, was all due to one *First Cause*. That this is strictly correct we have already shown in the earlier chapters of this *Essay* ; and it may seem obvious enough now, but was it equally so when the narrative was written ? Certainly not. For other ancient accounts are either *Pantheistic*, and confuse God with the universe ; or else *Dualistic*, and assume two eternal principles of good and evil ; or else *Polytheistic*, and make the universe the joint product of several gods. The Jewish writer,

on the other hand, has kept clear of all these theories ; and he is admittedly right and all the others wrong.

(2.) *Its gradual development.*

Next, it must be noticed that, according to Genesis, the creation of the world was on the system of gradual development. God did not create a perfect universe all at once, but slowly built it up step by step. At first the earth was waste and void, and only after it had passed through several stages did it become fully ordered and peopled. Moreover, at every step God surveyed the work and pronounced it *good*. He seems to have discerned a beauty and fitness intrinsic to each stage. And thus, while He found supreme satisfaction only at the close, when He could say of the whole finished work that it was *very good*, yet there was a lower satisfaction, calling forth a lower approval, simply *good*, at each step.

Now what has science to say to this ? It can only re-echo its truth from beginning to end. What is the whole of geology but an overwhelming testimony to the fact that the formation and peopling of the earth has been a gradual process, not accomplished all at once, but slowly step by step ? It shows that the earth existed for ages before the appearance of man ; and also that those ages were of such magnitude and importance that we cannot regard them as mere preparations for his coming, but as having a beauty and excellence strictly their own. Thus, according to science, though man is the highest member of creation, and though all evolution has tended to him as its final result, yet there were many earlier stages which well

deserved the epithet *good*. But we may ask, how did the writer of Genesis know all this ?

(3.) *The method of creation.*

Now, how was this gradual development effected ? According to Genesis every creative act was accomplished by a *word of command* from God. This does not, of course, mean that certain words were audibly uttered, but that the kind of power God exerted could be least inadequately represented by the human word of command. The All-Mighty One had not to labour over His work, but could accomplish it all by a mere *word* ; each stage being due to what we may call a *creative impulse*.

And here, again, science seems in agreement, for it is unable of itself to account for the *first* appearance of the various members of creation, such as plants, animals, and men. It is not, of course, disputed that these various stages were, or may have been, evolved from the previous ones, *e.g.*, the vital from the non-vital, which Genesis itself implies in the words *and the earth brought forth grass*. What is disputed is, that this evolution took place merely under the influence of natural development, and without the further influence of a new creative impulse. And considering that all attempts to effect a similar transition *now* have failed hopelessly, it is not unreasonable to suppose that there was some other and special cause at work then.

Nor is it easy to see how some of the changes could have been otherwise effected. Take, for example, this very subject of the origin of life. As far as we know,

the only natural mode in which life can begin is from a living parent, and yet there was a time when there were no living parents on this earth. How, then, could it originate, except by some process other than natural, *i.e.*, supernatural? Or, again, to take another instance, when the first *free being*, whether animal or man, appeared on this planet, a force totally different from all previous ones was introduced; and no natural process can bridge over the gulf which separates natural forces from free forces, since the latter are in their essence supernatural.

Anyhow, it must be admitted that Divine impulses would adequately account for these various steps in creation, and that science cannot account for them in any other way; while if such impulses occurred at all, the positions assigned to them in Genesis are plainly the most suitable. Thus, to put it shortly, science knows nothing as to what brought about the different stages in creation, and therefore agrees, as far as it can agree, with Genesis, which expressly assigns them to a Cause of which science could not possibly know anything. So here, as in other cases, the general principles of the narrative are either certainly or probably correct.

#### (C.) THE DETAILED ORDER OF CREATION.

We pass on now to the detailed order of creation. It will be remembered that in Genesis, after describing the origin of the universe and the earliest state of the earth, eight acts of creation are enumerated, two of which occurred on the third and two on the sixth day. We have thus altogether ten subjects to examine.

(1.) *The origin of the universe.*

'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' It is, I believe, admitted on all sides that the Hebrew word for *created* does not necessarily mean created out of nothing; indeed, it is often used in places where it cannot possibly have this meaning,<sup>1</sup> so that the eternal existence of matter, as it is called, is left an open question by Genesis. And as the term *heaven and earth* is the common Hebrew one for the universe, little stress can be laid on *heaven* coming before *earth*. But it may imply a priority in time of creation; and if so, it is almost certainly correct, as many suns and stars came into existence before our earth. Omitting, however, this doubtful point, it is clear from Genesis that the universe had an origin, and that this origin was due to God; and, as we have shown, science forces us to precisely the same conclusion.

(2.) *The earliest state of the earth.*

According to Genesis, taking the words in their obvious and natural sense, the earth was at first *waste and void* and in *darkness*, and apparently surrounded by *the waters*. And if, adopting the usual nebula hypothesis, we refer this to the first period after it became a separate planet, and had cooled so as to be not self-luminous, the statements seem quite correct. For we know from geology that the earth was then waste and void as far as any form of life was concerned, while it was probably surrounded by a dense mass of watery vapours sufficient to produce darkness. Genesis

<sup>1</sup> E.g., Ps. 102. 18; Isa. 54. 16; Ezek. 21. 30.

then starts from the right starting-point, but again we must ask, how did the writer know this ?

(3.) *Light.*

The first step in the development of the earth was, we are told, the introduction of *light*. And turning to science, it is clear that, being given the raw materials of a planet, the introduction of light, or radiant force as it is now called (for light in nature always includes heat), must be the first step in developing and arranging them. For on it depends all changes in temperature, the formation of winds, clouds, rain, and ocean currents ; while it also supplies the physical power needed for the life of plants and animals ; and therefore in placing *light* as the first step, Genesis is certainly correct.

Of course, the *source* of light at this early period was the remainder of the gaseous nebula from which our planet was thrown off ; so that it was diffused through an immense space, instead of being concentrated like that of our present sun. But still as it was all on one side of the revolving earth, there would be the alternations of light and darkness, which are alluded to in the narrative, and which were previously unknown. It may also be noticed that Genesis seems to associate light with *motion*. (' The spirit of God *moved* upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be *light*.' ) And this is the more significant in view of the modern discovery that light is due to the undulations of æther, and is, in fact, only a form of motion.

(4.) *The firmament.*

The next step was the separation of the waters above (the clouds) from the waters below (the seas), and

placing between them a firmament or expanse (see margin), *i.e.*, *the atmosphere*. The idea that the writer thought this expanse meant a solid plane holding up the waters above is quite unnecessary. For the firmament was called 'Heaven,' and the upper waters, above the 'heaven,' must mean the sources from which the rain from heaven comes. And these sources are easily seen to be clouds, and no writer could have thought that a solid firmament intervened between the clouds and the earth; more especially as we read later on that birds are to fly in this firmament.

It is sometimes objected to this view, that the sun and moon are said to have been set in the *firmament*, which is not, strictly speaking, correct if this means the atmosphere. But the writer could scarcely have meant it literally; for anyone can see that the clouds (*i.e.*, the waters above the firmament) are not, as a matter of fact, on the other side of the sun and moon, but frequently come in front of them. It may also be added that the English word *heaven* has a similar vagueness, for we speak of the clouds of heaven and the stars of heaven. On the whole, then, there can be little doubt that the firmament means the atmosphere, the formation of which was doubtless due to the cooling of the earth, when some of the surrounding gases became mechanically united to form air. And the order in which it is placed after light and before plants and animals is obviously correct.

(5.) *The dry land.*

We now come to an important point, the first appearance of dry land. According to Genesis, there



was not always dry land on the earth ; the whole of it was originally covered by the waters. And turning to science, it seems probable that this was actually the case. The earth was originally surrounded by watery vapours, which gradually condensed and formed a kind of universal ocean. And then, when irregularities were caused in the surface, either by volcanic action or else by its contracting and crumpling up, the water would collect into the hollows, forming seas, and dry land would appear elsewhere. But how was it possible for the writer of Genesis to know all this ? There is nothing in the present aspect of nature to suggest that there was once a time when there was no dry land ; and if it was a guess on his part, it was, to say the least, a very remarkable one.

(6.) *Vegetation.*

We next come to the introduction of life ; which, it will be noticed, is placed in exactly its right position in the narrative. For vegetation requires four things : *soil, air, water, and light* including heat ; and these are precisely the four things which then existed.

With regard to the subdivisions of vegetable life, the narrative speaks of grass, herbs, and fruit-trees ; and it seems to imply that these appeared simultaneously. But considering its general structure, which is that of a sequence of events, the other view, that they appeared successively, is at least tenable. This would mean that vegetable life, now first introduced on this planet, gave rise to a long line of descendants, the three most important groups being specially mentioned. And the order in which these come agrees

well with geology. We have first *grass*, which apparently means here *seedless* vegetation, since seed is specially mentioned in regard to the other two, but omitted here. This, then, would correspond to what we now call cryptogams, such as seaweeds, mosses, and ferns, which are propagated by spores, and not by seeds, and these undoubtedly came first. *Herbs* are mentioned next, probably cereals and vegetables; and lastly, *fruit-trees*, which we know did not occur till comparatively late in geological time. However, little stress can be laid on this, as the meaning of the Hebrew words is somewhat uncertain.

Before passing on, an apparent difficulty may be noticed, which is, that the series of plants and trees was not, as a matter of fact, complete before the following periods of creation. Some new species, for instance, were evolved long after the commencement of fishes and birds, and similarly some fishes and birds after the commencement of animals. But the difficulty is entirely due to the fact that the various classes *overlap* to some extent. And the order given in Genesis is far nearer the truth than any other order would be. Had the writer, for example, placed them fishes, birds, plants, animals; or animals, fishes, birds, plants; he would have been hopelessly wrong. As it is, by placing them plants, fishes, birds, animals, he is as near the truth as he can be, provided classes which really overlap have to be arranged in a consecutive narrative.

(7.) *The sun and moon.*

We next come to the formation of the sun and moon. The stars are also mentioned, but it is not said that

they were made on the fourth day, and they are not alluded to in the opening command. Now, the alleged formation of the sun *after* that of light is undoubtedly the most striking point in the whole narrative, and was long thought to be a difficulty. Various explanations, more or less forced, were adopted ; but they are happily no longer required. For science has now proved to almost a certainty that the statement of Genesis is strictly correct. However strange it may seem at first sight, light did undoubtedly exist long before the sun. In other words, the gaseous matter forming the original nebula of our solar system was luminous long before it contracted and consolidated into a body with a definite outline and emitting such an intense and concentrated light, as could be called a sun. And as a planet like the earth would cool and consolidate much quicker than the central mass, vegetation might take place here before the gaseous nebula had become a sun. Thus the formation of the sun after light is certainly correct, and after our atmosphere, dry land, and vegetation, probably correct.

And if it be urged that on this view the sun was not actually created on the fourth day, but had merely by that time sufficiently contracted to become a *great light*, and that Genesis ought to have implied this, the answer is obvious. It is precisely what Genesis has done. The original creation of the sun is described in verse 1 under the term *Heaven*, and when on the fourth day we are told that God *made* two great lights, a different word is used which means *appointed* rather than *created*, and is

sometimes so translated.<sup>1</sup> This exactly agrees with what we now know to be true. The sun was originally created (or evolved) as a nebulous mass, and not till long afterwards did it contract so as to become the *great light* which we see at present.

Two objections have now to be considered. The first is, that the *moon* would consolidate before the earth, being smaller, and not after it like the sun. But when considered as *lights*, as they are in the narrative, it is quite correct to class the two together, since moonlight is only reflected sunlight; and, therefore, before the sun contracted so as to give out a powerful light, the moon could not have shone very brightly either. This is, of course, obvious to everyone now, but was it equally so when the narrative was written?

The second objection is, that according to Genesis, the earth seems to be the centre of everything, and even the sun, or at all events its light, is represented as existing solely for the sake of lighting the earth. Now no doubt the narrative takes for granted that the earth is the most important member of the solar system; but no objection can be taken to this, provided none of the statements are false, since as far as man is concerned—and the narrative was written for him alone—the earth undoubtedly is the most important member. And then as to the object of sunlight. Science of course knows nothing as to what was the real object the Creator had in view when He designed this or anything else; but we do know that sunlight is of use to the inhabitants

<sup>1</sup> E.g., 1 Sam. 12. 6.

of this planet, and we do not know that it serves any other useful purpose whatever.

These, however, are but minor matters ; the important point, as before said, is that the writer of Genesis places the formation of the sun *after* that of light. This must have appeared when it was written, and for thousands of years afterwards, an obvious absurdity, since everyone could see that the sun was the source of light. We now know that it is quite correct. But is it likely that the writer of Genesis had any human means of knowing this ; or is it likely that, without such means, he should have made such a wonderfully lucky guess ? It seems hard to exaggerate the great improbability of either alternative ; and yet there is no other, unless we admit that the knowledge was divinely revealed.

(8.) *Fishes and birds.*

We next come to the introduction of fishes and birds. It is not clear whether the narrative means that they appeared simultaneously or successively, though here, as in other cases, the latter is the more probable. And it is needless to point out that science entirely agrees in thus placing fishes before birds and also in placing both of these after plants. Indeed, this latter point must be obvious to every naturalist, since the food of all animals is derived, either directly or indirectly, from the vegetable world. And Genesis is equally correct in emphasising the great *abundance* of *marine* life at this period, though, as far as we know, had the same been said of *fowl* it would not have been correct ; and also in specially alluding to the great *sea-monsters*

(wrongly translated *whales* in A.V.), since these huge saurians were a striking feature of the time.

It should also be noticed that the narrative associates fishes and birds together, and separates them from land animals ; and this, though by no means obvious, is also correct. For fishes and birds are both oviparous, producing their young in eggs ; their method of locomotion, either by wings in the air or fins in the water, is extremely similar ; and their blood is practically the same, though this latter point was only discovered in modern times. Land animals on the other hand are, with trifling exceptions, quite different in each of these important respects. But again we must ask, what was there to suggest to the writer of Genesis that birds more resemble fishes, which live in the water, than animals, which, like themselves, are air-breathers and live on the land ?

But we now come to what is perhaps the most important argument against the accuracy of the narrative. It refers to *invertebrate* animals, which include an immense variety of creatures, ranging from sponges and corals up to insects and shell-fish ; and where do these come in the narrative ? Some would place them among the *moving creatures* brought forth by the waters ; and others among the *creeping things* brought forth on the land. But in either case their position would be wrong, as invertebrate animals of some kind accompanied plants all along. The difficulty, however, is by no means insuperable, for neither of the above classes need include invertebrates. The former may refer to fishes alone, and the latter to

small animals. Why, then, may not invertebrates be omitted from the narrative? It never claims to describe everything that was created; and its extreme brevity, combined with the relative insignificance of these creatures, might well account for their being left out. And if so, the difficulty vanishes.

(9.) *Land animals.*

We next come to land animals, which apparently were produced from the earth, and not from previous fishes and birds. Science can give no corroboration here, though it shows that the order in which land animals are placed, after fishes and birds and before man, is quite correct. It is true that a few marsupials have been found in the Trias, which is perhaps as early as any birds, though this latter point is doubtful. But these form a small and altogether exceptional group, and unless fresh discoveries are made, will be an anomaly hard to account for on any theory. Land animals as a whole undoubtedly succeeded both fishes and birds. With regard to the subdivision of these animals only three classes are mentioned: *cattle* (domestic animals), *creeping things* (meaning doubtful), and *beasts of the earth* (wild animals). And as they come in a different order in verses 24 and 25, perhaps due to some error in copying, it would be unsafe to found on them any argument either way.

(10.) *Man.*

Last of all we come to the creation of man. This clearly means mankind or the human species, and not a single individual, from the subsequent words, 'Let *them* have dominion.' Now this creation of man is

represented as not only separate in time and distinct in nature, but of an altogether higher order than any of the preceding ones, since man was made (or evolved) in the *image of God*. This Divine likeness must of course depend not on any attribute, bodily or mental, which man shares with animals—for if so, they also would be in the image of God—but on some attribute which distinguishes man from the rest of creation. And yet, strange to say, the writer who assigns to man this unique character, does not give him, as we should have expected, *a day* to himself, but links him together with land animals as both appearing on the sixth day. He thus represents man as having a certain relationship with animals, though being in part supernatural. And science agrees in all five points: as to the relative *time* at which man appeared; his being due to a distinct *cause* or impulse; this impulse being of a *higher order* than any preceding one; man being in consequence an *image of God*, and yet closely allied to *animals* in his physical nature.

And first as to the time of man's appearance. Everyone agrees that this was not till towards the close of the Tertiary or most recent group of strata; and no animal can be shown to have appeared since then. Man was thus not only a late, but the very latest member of creation, which is precisely the position assigned to him in Genesis.

With regard to the actual date, the Bible says nothing; for its chronology only leads back to the creation of *Adam* in chap. 2, and not to that of the *human species* in chap. 1. And it is implied



in several places that there were pre-Adamite races of men.<sup>1</sup>

Next, as to man being due to a special cause. We have already considered in Chapter IV. the enormous difference between animals and man. And though the first man may have been evolved from a previous ape, such a vast change, especially if it only occurred once in the world's history, seems to have required a special Divine impulse. At all events, science cannot account for it in any other way.

Moreover, this evolution involved not only a great development of existing faculties, but the introduction of an altogether new and higher faculty, *i.e.*, the known possession of a free will, enabling man, on a small scale, both to design and to accomplish. This has been already shown to be the characteristic of man when compared with the rest of creation, so need not be further considered here.

Fourthly, it will be remembered that the possession of a similar freedom, also able both to design and to accomplish, was shown in Chapters I. and II. to be the characteristic of the Deity, which distinguished His action from that of all natural forces. Scientifically, then, it is strictly true to say that man is made *in the image of God*, since the special attribute which distinguishes him from all else on this planet is precisely the attribute of God Himself.

While, lastly, science has rendered it abundantly clear that, in spite of all this, man in his physical nature is closely allied to land animals. And therefore the

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 4. 15-17, 26; 6. 2-4.

division in Genesis of fishes and birds on one day, and land animals and man on another, is more correct than the more obvious division of all animals on one day and man on another.

In dwelling on details like these, however, though many of them are sufficiently striking, there is a danger of forgetting the main features, which are, after all, the important point. They are briefly these. In Genesis there are three periods of life, each with a leading feature : that of the third day being vegetation ; that of the fifth day fishes and birds, special mention being made of great sea-monsters ; and that of the sixth day land animals, and at its close man. Now, turning to science, we find that geologists have grouped the sedimentary rocks into three great classes ; and these have precisely the same characteristics as the three periods in Genesis. The Primary age is distinguished by its exuberant vegetation ; the Secondary by its saurians, or great sea-monsters ; and the Tertiary by its land animals ; and at its close (now often called the Quaternary) by man. The harmony between the two is, to say the least, very remarkable.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

We have now examined in detail the account of creation given in Genesis, and have compared it as far as possible with the teaching of astronomy and geology. There is, however, one other science to be considered, which is Comparative Biology, or the theory of Evolution, as it is popularly called. We have not alluded to this before, because the arguments are not of such a kind as to appeal to the ordinary reader. Suffice it to

say that it entirely corroborates the order given in Genesis, as has been admitted by its leading exponents. For instance, Romanes says, and as if the fact was undisputed, 'The order in which the flora and fauna are said, by the Mosaic account, to have appeared upon the earth corresponds with that which the theory of Evolution requires and the evidence of geology proves.'<sup>1</sup> We decide, then, that the order in which the different members of creation are mentioned in Genesis is in most cases certainly, and in all cases probably, correct.

And the importance of this can scarcely be exaggerated, for the points of agreement between Genesis and science are far too many and far too unlikely to be due to accident. They are far too many ; for the chances against even eight events being put down in their correct order by guesswork is 40,319 to 1. And they are far too unlikely ; for what could have induced an ignorant man to say that light came before the sun, or that the earth once existed without any dry land ? Moreover, the general principles of the narrative, especially its pure Monotheism and its gradual development, are very strongly in its favour. While our admiration for it is still further increased by its extreme conciseness and simplicity. Seldom, indeed, has such a mass of information been condensed into as few lines ; and seldom has such a difficult subject been treated so accurately, and yet in such simple and popular language.

Now what conclusion can be drawn from all this ? There seem to be only two alternatives to choose from :

<sup>1</sup> *Nature*, 11th August, 1881.

either the writer, whoever he was, knew as much, or more, of science than we do, or else the knowledge was revealed to him by God. And if we admit revelation at all, the latter certainly seems the less improbable. We therefore conclude that this account of the creation appears to have been *Divinely revealed*.

## CHAPTER X.

### THAT ITS ORIGIN WAS ATTESTED BY MIRACLES.

Great Importance of the Pentateuch, depending on its date. The use of earlier documents, and some later additions must of course be admitted.

(A.) THE LANGUAGE OF THE PENTATEUCH.

In general character it resembles the Hebrew Prophets, but its numerous archaisms point to a much earlier time.

(B.) THE HISTORIES OF THE PENTATEUCH.

(1.) The *Egypticity* of certain parts, strongly in favour of its early date.

(2.) Their apparent truthfulness.

(C.) THE LAWS OF THE PENTATEUCH.

These are also in favour of its early date, as shown by :

(1.) Their subject-matter.

(2.) Their wording.

(3.) Their relation to the history.

(4.) Their relation to one another.

(D.) THE LATE-DATE THEORY.

(1.) Its extreme improbability for many reasons.

(2.) The argument from silence of subsequent writers.

(3.) And from inconsistent practices.

(E.) CONCLUSION.

The Pentateuch is, on the whole, a contemporary narrative ; and we hence seem forced to admit many of the miracles which it records. Slight objection from there being no confirming evidence from other sources.

We pass on now to the *origin* of the Jewish Religion—that is to say, the events connected with the Exodus

from Egypt. And as the only account we have of these is contained in the *Pentateuch*, it is of the utmost importance to examine this book carefully. Is it a trustworthy, and, on the whole, accurate account of the events which it records? And this depends chiefly on its date. Is it a *contemporary* document?

And there is an important point to notice at starting. It is, that modern discoveries have shown conclusively that there is nothing in the *Pentateuch*, except the earlier chapters of Genesis, which might not have been written down as it occurred. For we now know that writing was in common use throughout Babylonia and Egypt centuries before the time of Abraham, and these are precisely the two countries with which the ancestors of the Jews had most to do. While at the time of the Exodus, Egypt was in such a civilized state, that it is practically certain that Moses, and the other leaders of Israel, could have written had they chosen. And as they somehow or other brought the Israelites out of Egypt, it is extremely probable that they should have recorded it. But did they, and do we possess this record in the *Pentateuch*? This is the question we have to decide, and it must be examined at some length.

Fortunately the inquiry is somewhat simplified by the fact that the *Pentateuch* distinctly *claims* to have been written by Moses. It is not merely that this title is given to it in a heading, which might easily be added in later times; or even in an opening verse, such as in Deuteronomy, *These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel*. But it is asserted, positively and re-

peatedly, all through the book that the events or laws referred to were actually *written down* by Moses. This is an important point, and it must not be forgotten.<sup>1</sup>

Of course Moses may, and probably did in some cases avail himself of previous documents, one of these, 'the Book of the Wars of the Lord,' being quoted in Num. 21. 14. While quite recently (1902) it has been found that some of the laws are many centuries older than Moses; as they occur in the code of Hammurabi of Babylon, probably the Amraphel of Gen. 14.

On the other hand, everyone must admit that slight *additions* have been made to the Pentateuch since the time of Moses.<sup>2</sup> The most important is the list of Edomite kings, who are said to have reigned *before there reigned any king over the children of Israel*, which brings the passage down to the time of Saul at least. But it is probably a later insertion, as the dukes of Edom mentioned in vv. 40-43 seem naturally to follow those of Seir in vv. 29, 30. There are also two passages referring to Abraham, after which it is added *the Canaanite was then in the land*. This was plainly to prevent a possible misconception that at the time of his journey the country was uninhabited. And hence these notes must have been written after the conquest of the land by Joshua. But they also appear to be subsequent additions; and if so, this would point to an earlier date for the original narrative, which was written when such explanations were thought unnecessary. And exactly the same may be said as to the

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 17. 14; 24. 4; 34. 27; Num. 33. 2; Deut. 31. 9, 22, 24.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 36. 31-39; 12. 6; 13. 7; Exod. 16. 36; Deut. 2. 10-12, 20 23; 3. 14; 34.

note on the *omer*, that it is the *tenth part of an ephah*. This was evidently a later addition, when the *omer* had fallen into disuse and needed explanation.

With regard to these and other slight additions, it must be remembered that it was the custom in ancient times for notes on a previous document to be incorporated in the text, and not put at the bottom of the page, or at the end of the book, as at present. And, hence, adding such notes did not imply any deception on the part of the subsequent editor; he was merely endeavouring to make the original sense more easily understood. And they may all be omitted without breaking the continuity of the narrative. It thus differs altogether from composing a whole document, and falsely ascribing it to some earlier writer, which would entirely destroy our confidence in it. And therefore, as before said, the *date* of the Pentateuch is of the utmost importance. And in deciding the question, we will first consider its *language*, then its *histories*, then its *laws*, then the *late-date theory*, and lastly the *conclusion* to be drawn from admitting its genuineness.

#### (A.) THE LANGUAGE OF THE PENTATEUCH.

Now in general character the language of the Pentateuch undoubtedly resembles that of some of the prophets, such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel; and this is often appealed to as showing that it must date from about the same time. But unfortunately critics who maintain this view do not admit that we have *any* genuine Hebrew documents of a much earlier date, with which to compare it. And therefore we have no



means of knowing how much the language altered; so this of itself proves little.

But it is further urged that we have two actual *signs of late date*. The first is that the common word for *west* in the Pentateuch really means *the sea*, and hence, it is said, the writer's standpoint must have been that of Canaan, and the books must have been written after the settlement in that country. But the fallacy here is obvious. In all probability this word was adopted in the Hebrew language before the time of Abraham, when the sea, *i.e.*, the Mediterranean, actually was to the west. And in later years a Hebrew, who was writing in Egypt or anywhere else, would naturally use the word, without thinking that it was inappropriate to that particular place. The other expression is *beyond Jordan*, which is frequently used to denote the *eastern* bank; and hence again, it is urged, the writer's standpoint must have been that of Canaan. But this is also untenable. For the same term is used for the *western* bank in several places.<sup>1</sup> And therefore no inference as to the date of the book can be drawn from either of these expressions.

On the other hand, there are several *signs of early date*, for the Pentateuch contains a variety of archaisms. Of course, most of these can only be understood by a Hebrew scholar; but this is the less to be regretted, because, I believe, the fact is undisputed. We will therefore give a couple of examples only, which are plain to the English reader. The pronoun for *he* is commonly used throughout the Pentateuch both for

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 3. 20; Josh. 9. 1; 12. 7.

male and female ; while in the later writings it is confined to males, the females being expressed by a derived form which is very seldom used in the Pentateuch. Similarly, the word for *youth* is used in the Pentateuch for both sexes, though afterwards restricted to males only, the female being again expressed by a derived form. These differences, though small, are very significant, and they clearly show that the language was at a less developed, and therefore earlier, stage in the Pentateuch than in the rest of the Old Testament.

And much the same is shown by some of the names and terms in common use. Take, for instance, the terms *children of Israel* and *Israel* ; the latter being plainly a contracted and subsequent form of the other, when the idea of a family or tribe had given way to that of a nation. Israel, it will be remembered, was another name for Jacob, whose sons were the ancestors of the twelve tribes. Now the people are called *children of Israel* 334 times in the Pentateuch, and *Israel* 101 times ; while in the rest of the Old Testament the figures are 239 and 1,074 respectively ; so the writer of the Pentateuch was clearly accustomed to the earlier form. And this again points to its having been written some centuries before the other books of the Old Testament.

Of course, there is an alternative theory, which is that the Pentateuch was written at a *late date*, and that these archaic terms were either purposely inserted to give the work the air of antiquity, or else are fragments of some earlier documents which the late writer incor-

porated in his narrative. And on this latter supposition, critics, relying on slight differences of style and language, have split up the book into a number of different writings, which they assign to a number of imaginary writers from the ninth century B.C. onwards. For instance, to take a passage where only three writers are supposed to be involved, Exod. 7. 14-25. These twelve verses seem to the ordinary reader a straightforward narrative, but they have been thus split up.<sup>1</sup> Verses 19, 22, and parts of 20, 21, are assigned to P, the supposed writer of the Priestly Code of Laws; v. 24 and parts of 17, 20, 21, to E; and the remainder to J; the two latter writers being thus named from their generally describing the Deity as Elohim and Jehovah respectively.

Fortunately, we need not discuss the minute and complicated arguments on which all this rests, for the Pentateuch, as we shall see, has strong claims to a *contemporary* origin. And if so, it matters little whether it was the work of one or more writers; though the idea of their writings being so hopelessly intermixed seems in any case to be most improbable.

#### (B.) THE HISTORIES OF THE PENTATEUCH.

We pass on now to the historical portions of the Pentateuch; and will first consider what is called the Egyptianity of the narrative, and then its apparent truthfulness.

##### (1.) *The Egyptianity of the narrative.*

By this is meant that the part of the Pentateuch in which reference is made to Egyptian matters appears

<sup>1</sup> Driver's Introduction to Literature of Old Testament, p. 22.

to be written with correct details throughout. This would of course be only natural in a contemporary writer acquainted with Egypt, but would be most unlikely for a late writer in Canaan. The evidence cannot of course be properly appreciated without some knowledge of ancient Egypt ; but it is far too important to be omitted.

We must first notice three cases where it is often said that the writer seems *not* to have been a contemporary, since Egyptian customs are there explained, as if unknown to the reader. These are their eating at different tables from the Hebrews, their abhorrence of shepherds, and their habit of embalming.<sup>1</sup> But when the context is examined, the inference from the first two will be seen to be very doubtful ; though that from the third is in favour of a late date.

On the other hand, there is abundant evidence in favour of a contemporary origin. We will first consider the history of Joseph. Nearly every point in this can be illustrated by ancient inscriptions. For instance, to take a single chapter,<sup>2</sup> we know that the Pharaohs attached great weight to *dreams*, and that they used to consult their *magicians* and *wise men* when in doubt, both these classes being often mentioned—and mentioned together—on the monuments. Moreover, the *details* of the dreams are peculiarly Egyptian. Cattle coming up out of the river and feeding on the reed-grass was a common sight in Egypt, but must have been almost unknown in Canaan. In the same way *seven-eared wheat* is a well-known product of Egypt,

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 43. 32 ; 46. 34 ; 50. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 41.

but is nowhere mentioned as grown in Canaan. We also know that there was an official called the Superintendent of the Bakery (*i.e.*, the *chief baker*), and that another had the same position in regard to the *Butlers*.

Next, when Joseph was hastily summoned to appear before Pharaoh, it is mentioned that he yet stopped to *shave*. To anyone familiar with Egypt, nothing could be more natural than this ; but to an Israelite, on the other hand, it would be most unnatural.<sup>1</sup> So, again, the custom of laying up corn in store-houses, to provide against the frequent famines, and for taxation, was thoroughly Egyptian ; the Superintendent of the Granaries being a well-known official. Moreover, we know that when foreigners rose to great importance in Egypt, they often adopted a *change of name* ; and that it was the custom to give a *signet ring*, and a gold collar (or *chain* about the neck) as a mark of royal favour. This bestowal of a gold collar was a peculiarly Egyptian custom, being called *receiving gold*, and is continually alluded to on the monuments. And Joseph's new name Zaphenathpaneah, as well as Asenath, and Poti-phera, are all genuine Egyptian words. In short, everything in this chapter, (and it is but a sample of many others,) is perfectly correct for Egypt, though much of it would be incorrect for Canaan.

And there is also evidence (indirect, but perhaps the more valuable on that account) that all this latter part of Genesis was actually written in Egypt. This is afforded by six passages, where, after the name of a

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. 10. 5.

place, is added some such phrase as *which is in Canaan*.<sup>1</sup> And yet there do not appear to be any other places of the same name liable to be confused with these. When then would it be necessary to explain to the Israelites that these places, Shechem, etc., were in Canaan? Certainly not after the conquest, when they were living there, and it was evident to everyone; so we must refer them to the time of the sojourn in Egypt. And this is confirmed by a curious remark as to the *desert of Shur*, which lies between Egypt and Canaan. It is described as being *before Egypt as thou goest towards Assyria*. Clearly then this passage must also have been written in Egypt, since only to one living there would Shur appear on the way to Assyria.

Next, as to the history of Moses. His being exposed in an ark of *papyrus* smeared with bitumen was quite suited to Egypt, where both materials were commonly used, but would have been most unsuitable anywhere else. Again, we find the use of *straw* in brickmaking is alluded to, as is also the custom of reaping the corn *close to the ear*, so as to leave the bulk of the straw standing in the field as stubble.<sup>2</sup> Both of these were undoubtedly Egyptian customs; but, as far as we know, the Israelites in Canaan never made bricks with straw, while their method of reaping was to tie up the corn in sheaves instead of collecting it in baskets.<sup>3</sup>

Again, it is said, when speaking of the death of the firstborn, *against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments*, but no explanation is given of what is

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 23. 2, 19; 33. 18; 35. 6; 48. 3; 49. 30; and 25. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. 5. 7, 12.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., Gen. 37. 7.

meant by this.<sup>1</sup> It refers to the Egyptian idolatry in worshipping *living* animals, the firstborn of which were also to die ; but this would only be familiar to a writer in Egypt, since, as far as we know, such worship was never practised in Canaan. Again, we read of laws being written on the doorposts and gates of houses, and on great stones covered with plaster, both of which were undoubtedly Egyptian customs ; as was also the practice of placing offerings of food for the dead.<sup>2</sup> Again, the customary diet of the Israelites in Egypt is given as fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic, all of which were commonly eaten there.<sup>3</sup> But as the Hebrew names of four out of the five vegetables do not occur elsewhere in the Bible, they could scarcely have been common in Canaan ; while none of the characteristic productions of that land, such as honey, milk, butter, figs, raisins, almonds, and olives, are mentioned. The list is, as it ought to be, thoroughly Egyptian.

Next, as to the *Ten Plagues*. There is much local colouring here, and hardly one of them would have been suitable in Canaan. Moreover, their order of sequence is very remarkable. It is clear from the mention of stubble as still in the fields that the first interview of Moses with Pharaoh took place shortly after harvest-time, say May or June ; while the Exodus took place in the month Abib, which corresponds to our March and April. Hence we have nearly a year along which to distribute the plagues ; and it will be

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 12. 12 ; Num. 33. 4.    <sup>2</sup> Deut. 6. 9 ; 11. 20 ; 26. 14 ; 27. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Num. 11. 5.

seen that they agree with the natural calamities of Egypt in a remarkable manner.

(1.) The water being turned into blood probably refers to the discoloration of the Nile, which takes place annually about the end of June, though it is not generally sufficient to kill the fish or render the water unfit to drink. (2.) Frogs are most troublesome in September. (3.) Lice, perhaps mosquitoes, and (4.) flies, are unfortunately not confined to one month. (5.) Murrain among the cattle and (6.) boils probably correspond to the diseases mentioned in the ancient papyri as occurring after the subsidence of the inundations, *i.e.*, about November or December. (7.) The particulars given in regard to the hail, that the barley was then in the ear, but the wheat not grown up, fix its date about the end of February. (8.) Locusts are known to have visited Egypt terribly in March, which seems the time intended, as the leaves were then young. (9.) The darkness *which might be felt* was probably due to the desert wind, which blows at intervals after the end of March, and sometimes brings with it such clouds of sand as to darken the atmosphere.<sup>1</sup> The agreement all through is most remarkable, and very suggestive of a contemporary date. How easily a late writer might destroy it by accidentally altering the order of the plagues is shown in Ps. 78 and 105; neither list agrees with the Penta-teuch, and as little do they agree with each other.

<sup>1</sup> I have noticed the same in the Transvaal, in particular a sand-storm at Christiana, on 20th Oct., 1900, which so darkened the sky that for about a quarter of an hour I had to light a candle.



It should also be noticed that a large part of the *ritual worship* prescribed in the Pentateuch is obviously borrowed from Egypt. The most striking instance is that of the *ark*. A sacred ark is seen on Egyptian monuments centuries before the Exodus, and is sometimes shown as carried by poles resting on men's shoulders, and surmounted by winged figures something like the cherubim. Among other points most likely derived from Egypt are the Tabernacle ; the mercy-seat ; the dress and regulations for the priests ; the overlaying the ark with gold ; and many of the ornaments of the sanctuary. All this implies a lawgiver who knew Egypt remarkably well, and a people who knew it almost as well. How very suitable this would be to the time of Moses, who was educated in Egypt, and to the Israelites, who had just come from there, scarcely needs pointing out ; while on the other hand, how unsuitable, if not impossible, it would be for a lawgiver centuries afterwards in Canaan is equally clear.

And it should be noticed the *materials* said to have been used for this worship are precisely such as the Israelites might have then employed. The ark, for instance, was not made of oak, or cedar, or fir, as would have been the case in Palestine, but of acacia (*shittim*), which is very common near Sinai, though rarely used in Palestine. And the other materials were goats' hair, rams' skins, sealskins from the adjoining gulfs of the Red Sea, and gold, silver, brass, precious stones, and fine linen from the Egyptian spoils ; the latter evidently so, as an Egyptian word

is used.<sup>1</sup> There is no anachronism anywhere, such as a late writer would have fallen into.

Moreover, in other places, the writer of the Pentateuch frequently assumes that his readers know Egypt as well as himself.<sup>2</sup> Thus the people are twice reminded of the *diseases* they suffered from in Egypt—‘*the evil diseases of Egypt which thou knowest*’—and are warned that if they misbehave God will punish them with the same diseases again. But such a warning would have had no force or appropriateness centuries after in Canaan. Again, they are exhorted to be kind to strangers, because they *knew the heart of a stranger*, seeing that they had been strangers in the land of Egypt. But this again would have had no influence in later times.

Elsewhere the writer describes the peculiarities of Canaan as to climate and productions; and with a view to their being better understood, he contrasts them with those of *Egypt*.<sup>3</sup> Obviously then the people are again supposed to know Egypt, and not to know Canaan. For instance, Canaan is described as a country of hills and valleys, and consequently of running brooks; and not like Egypt where they had to water the land with their *feet*. But no explanation is given of this. It refers to the *water-wheels*, which were necessary for raising water in a flat country like Egypt, and which were worked by men’s *feet*. But can we imagine a late writer in Canaan using such a phrase without explaining it? On the other hand, if

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 25. 1-10.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. 7. 15; 28. 60; Exod. 23. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. 8. 7-10; 11. 10-12.

the words were spoken by Moses, all is clear ; no explanation was given, because (for persons who had just come from Egypt) none was needed.

Lastly, the writer of the Pentateuch was evidently well acquainted with the Egyptian *language*. Nearly all the Egyptian names mentioned are accurate transcriptions of Egyptian words into Hebrew. Similarly the writer often uses Egyptian nouns, or nouns common to both languages, several of them sometimes occurring in a single verse ; e.g., *ark*, *papyrus*, *bitumen*, *pitch*, *flags*, *brink*, and the *river*.<sup>1</sup> And as many of these words are seldom, if ever, found in the Prophets when treating of Egyptian matters, we are justified in concluding that they are not only precisely such as a contemporary writer would have used, but are such as a late writer would not have used.

On the whole, then, it is plain that when Egyptian matters are touched upon in the Pentateuch, the most thorough familiarity with native customs, manners of life, seasons, and language is everywhere displayed, though in many cases these are quite different from those of Canaan. Moreover, the evidence is never introduced ostentatiously, or as if the writer wished to display his knowledge, but it drops out incidentally, and in the most natural manner possible. And we therefore seem forced to conclude that the writer was a contemporary who lived in Egypt, and knew the country intimately ; and as we have shown, he evidently wrote for persons who had only recently come from there.

(2.) *The apparent truthfulness of the narrative.*

It must next be noticed that the Histories of the Pentateuch have (apart from their miraculous element) an undoubted air of *truthfulness* about them. This is especially the case with the characters assigned to the Jewish Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Their good points, and their bad points, are narrated with perfect candour, and their characters are thoroughly *human* throughout. None of them are given mythical attributes. And this is certainly not what we should have expected had the Israelites in later days invented these stories. On the other hand, how true they are to human nature is self-evident.

Moreover, when the same subject is alluded to in different parts of the Pentateuch, the references are as a rule not only in perfect agreement, but the points of agreement are often of so incidental a character as to form what are called *Undesigned Coincidences*. And as we shall have occasion to refer to similar coincidences in other parts of the Bible, the kind of argument they afford must be carefully considered, more especially as its importance is not obvious at first sight.

Now, if we find two statements regarding an event, or series of events, which, though not identical, are yet perfectly consistent, this agreement must be either *accidental* or *not accidental*. An agreement which is too minute in detail to be accidental we will call a *coincidence*, and this of necessity implies that the statements are somehow connected together. If the alleged events are true, this connection may lie between the

*facts themselves*, each writer having independent knowledge of these ; and hence their statements being in perfect though unintentional agreement. But if the alleged events are not true, then this connection must lie between *the writers*, either one of them making his account harmonize with the other, or else both deriving their information from a common source. In the former case, there would be intentional agreement between the writers ; in the latter case, between the various parts of the original account. In any case, there would be designed agreement somewhere ; for, to put it shortly, the events, being imaginary, would not fit together of necessity, nor by accident, which is excluded, and hence must do so by design.

This has been otherwise expressed by saying that truth is necessarily consistent, but falsehood is not so ; and therefore, while consistency in truth may be undesigned, consistency in falsehood can only result from design. And from this it follows that an *undesigned coincidence* between two statements—provided of course we are fully convinced that it is a coincidence, and that it is undesigned—is a sure sign of truthfulness. It shows, moreover, that both writers possessed independent knowledge of the event, and were both telling the truth. And of course the same argument applies if the two statements are made by the same writer, though in this case there is a greater presumption that the agreement is not undesigned. And it should be noticed that the more indirect and unobtrusive is the agreement so much the stronger is the argument, while the more obvious the agreement the weaker the argument.

Having now explained the great value of undesigned coincidences, we will consider a single example in detail, and select the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.<sup>1</sup> Korah, we are told, was a Levite of the family of Kohath, and the other two were Reubenites ; and from incidental notices *in another part of the book*, we learn the position of the *tents* of these men. The Kohathites were to the south of the central Tabernacle, or tent of meeting, on an inner line of tents, while the Reubenites were also to the south, though on an outer line of tents.

This explains how easy it was for the leaders to form a secret conspiracy against Moses, as they could consult together without passing through any other tribe. It explains how, when Moses was talking to Korah, he had to *send for* Dathan and Abiram ; and how afterwards when they refused to come he *went unto them*. It explains how, later on, the *tents* of Dathan and Abiram are twice mentioned, while that of the leading conspirator, Korah, is strangely omitted. It explains how the *families* of these two were destroyed, though no mention is made of that of Korah, since, as Moses was within speaking distance, the destruction must have been very limited, and was probably confined to the tents of Dathan and Abiram, who were brothers, and the schismatical tabernacle they had erected alongside. (This must not be confused with the central Tabernacle, where the men who offered incense were destroyed, probably by lightning.) We may therefore conclude that Korah's *family* was not destroyed, since their tent, being on the inner line, was at

<sup>1</sup> Num. 16 ; 2. 10, 17 ; 3. 29.

some distance. And this accounts for the mention of Dathan and Abiram alone in Deut. 11. 6, as well as for what some have thought to be a discrepancy in Num. 26. 11, where we read that the *children* of Korah did not die. In fact, the position of these tents is the key to the narrative throughout, though we are left to discover it for ourselves.

Now if the account is true and written by a contemporary, all is plain; for truth, as said before, is necessarily consistent. But if the whole story is a late fiction, all this agreement in various places is, to say the least, remarkable. Can we imagine a writer of fiction *accidentally* arranging these details in different parts of his book, which fit together so perfectly? Or can we imagine him doing so *intentionally*, and yet never hinting at the agreement himself, but leaving it so unobtrusive that not one reader in a thousand ever discovers it? This single instance may be taken as a sample of about twenty others, though as a rule less striking, which have been noticed in the Pentateuch; and they certainly tend to show its accuracy.

But there is an important argument on the other side: it refers to the *immense number* of the Israelites said to have come out of Egypt; some 600,000 men besides women and children,<sup>1</sup> or probably over two million altogether. And this is a serious difficulty, as anyone can see, who will take the trouble to calculate the space they would require on the march, or in camp. If we assume, for instance, that they crossed the arm of the Red Sea in, say, *forty* parallel columns, these

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 12. 37.

would have to be of enormous length to contain 50,000 persons each, with their flocks and herds. And the whole tenour of the narrative is opposed to such huge unwieldy masses.

Many critics are consequently of opinion that the number has, somehow or other, got exaggerated. This has certainly been the case with some other numbers in the Old Testament (see Chapter XI.), and it would afford the most obvious solution, but for the detailed census given in Num. I., which totals up to about 600,000 men. It must therefore be admitted that the number forms a difficulty, whatever view we adopt, though not nearly enough to outweigh the mass of evidence in favour of the general truthfulness of the narrative.

(C.) THE LAWS OF THE PENTATEUCH.

We pass on now to the Laws of the Pentateuch, which commence in the middle of Exodus, and occupy the greater part of the remaining books. And as we shall see, they afford a strong additional argument in favour of its early date.

(1.) *Their subject-matter.*

In the first place several of the laws refer exclusively to the wilderness life of the Israelites ; and it is hence probable that they originated in the days of Moses. Among such laws may be mentioned those referring to the *Tabernacle* and its *furniture*.<sup>1</sup> It is obvious that we have here no mere description of the Tabernacle, but a set of working directions for its construction ; and if Moses received such instructions from God, that

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 25-28 ; 36-39.



he should at once record them is most reasonable. And that to this should be added soon afterwards a precise account of their carrying out is equally so. But at no later time is this *double* record of instructions and fulfilment at all probable. Nor can these laws have been invented, as is sometimes alleged, merely as a pattern for the first or second Temple ; for what need was there to describe such things as curtains, loops, clasps, boards, tenons, sockets, bars, screens, hangings, pillars, hooks, fillets, and pins, if the end in view was an imaginary pattern for a stone temple ? And yet this is all given in detail twice over ; so a late date for any of these chapters is most improbable.

A similar argument applies to the laws regarding the *camp and order of march*.<sup>1</sup> Full particulars are given as to the exact position every tribe was to occupy, and how the Levites were to carry the Tabernacle. And what could be the object of inventing such laws in later times, when, as far as we know, the Israelites never encamped or marched in this manner ? Moreover, had these laws been late inventions, the tribes would probably have been grouped round the Tabernacle in the wilderness in the same order in which they were grouped round the Temple in Canaan. But this is not the case ; so here also the hypothesis of a late date is most unlikely. All these laws then, amounting to eleven chapters, are shown by their subject-matter to be either of contemporary date, or else as far as we can judge very *useless* frauds.

Moreover, the subject-matter of many of the other

<sup>1</sup> Num. 1. 47—4. 49.

laws, though applicable to Canaan, is strongly suggestive of an early date ; for the laws are of such a *public* character that the Israelites in later times could scarcely have ascribed them to Moses if, as a matter of fact, they had only just been invented, and were unknown to their forefathers. Take, for instance, the remarkable *land* law, that whoever bought an estate was to restore it to its original owner in the year of Jubilee, the price gradually decreasing according to the nearness of this year.<sup>1</sup> How difficult it must have been to *first* introduce such a law as this ! It would have revolutionized the whole community ; for some men would suddenly lose their possessions, and others be as suddenly restored to theirs. And how could anyone in later times have made such a law, and yet assert that it had been in existence for centuries, though no one had ever heard of it ?

Or again, take the law regarding the *Levitical Cities*.<sup>2</sup> The Levites, it will be remembered, had no separate territory like the other tribes, but were given forty-eight special towns. And it is scarcely conceivable that such a curious arrangement could have been made at any time except that of the conquest ; still less that it could have been made centuries afterwards, and yet ascribed to Moses, without everyone at once declaring it to be spurious.

(2.) *Their wording.*

This also is strongly in favour of a Mosaic origin. To begin with, as many as fifteen different laws, which have special reference to Canaan, are introduced with some

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 25. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Num. 35. 1-8.

such phrase as *when ye be come into the land of Canaan*,<sup>1</sup> which plainly supposes that the people were not there already. And it is a phrase which would soon have dropped out had the laws been merely handed on traditionally, and not written down.

Again, many of the laws refer to the *camp*, and sometimes to *tents*, in such a way as to imply that the whole life and worship of Israel was carried on in a camp.<sup>2</sup> These laws were, with some necessary modifications, as binding in Canaan as in the wilderness ; so there was no reason to refer to the camp here, except the most natural one that they were actually issued in the camp, and were consequently adapted in their language to camp-life. And the fact that this temporary form is preserved in the laws, rather than the later permanent one, is strong evidence of their having been recorded by those who knew them only in their earlier form.

The wording then of all these laws bears unmistakable signs of contemporary origin. Of course, these signs may have been inserted at a later time to give subsequent laws a Mosaic air, but they cannot be explained on any other hypothesis. And herein lies the great value of this branch of the evidence. It shows conclusively that the laws are either contemporary, or they are deliberate frauds. No innocent mistake in ascribing an old law to Moses can explain

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 12. 25 ; 13. 11 ; Lev. 14. 34 ; 19. 23 ; 23. 10 ; 25. 2 ; Num. 15. 2, 18 ; 35. 10 ; Deut. 12. 1, 10, 29 ; 17. 14 ; 18. 9 ; 26. 1.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Exod. 29. 14 ; Lev. 4. 12 ; 6. 11 ; 13. 46 ; 14. 3 ; 16. 26 ; 17. 3 ; Num. 5. 2 ; 19. 3, 14.

such language ; either it is the natural result of the laws being genuine, or it was adopted with the express purpose to mislead.

One other point in the wording of these laws, especially those in Deuteronomy, demands attention ; though for a different reason. On the *late-date* theory they are of approximately the same age as the writings of the Prophets, and therefore we should expect them to be somewhat similar in style. But there is a remarkable difference. The latter are invariably spoken in God's name, and such expressions as *Thus saith the Lord, Hear ye the word of the Lord*, are extremely frequent, occurring altogether over 800 times ; but in the exhortations of the Pentateuch nothing of the kind is found. They are delivered by Moses in his own name, often with the simple words *I command thee*, which occur thirty times in Deuteronomy. Now, if the addresses are genuine, all is plain. Forty years' sole leadership might well have induced Moses to adopt such a peremptory tone. But is it likely that a late author, afraid of writing in his own name, would have adopted a style which was wholly without precedent in any writings of that time ?

(3.) *Their relation to the history.*

It will next be noticed that the laws are not systematically arranged, but are closely interwoven with the narrative. To begin with, as many as fourteen of them are actually *dated* either as to time or place. For instance, 'The Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt,

saying,' etc.<sup>1</sup> Again, several of them are linked to and immediately follow the particular incidents in the history which led to their enactment ;<sup>2</sup> and these are often of such a trivial nature, that it is hard to imagine their being invented.

Now, had the laws been the work of late writers, this is the last thing we should have expected ; the natural form for such writers to adopt being either isolated commands or systematic codes. A contemporary, on the other hand, would of course record the laws in connection with the events which gave rise to them, and at the times and places of their original promulgation ; and this is precisely what we find in the Pentateuch. It shows, not a complete legislation, but one *in process of growth*, and of growth in intimate connection with the accompanying history.

And this is confirmed by the fact that in several places, especially in Deuteronomy, stress is laid on the people's *personal knowledge* of the events referred to ; e.g., 'The Lord made not this covenant' (that at Horeb) 'with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.'<sup>3</sup> Of course only persons over forty years of age would have been born before the Exodus ; but these elders would have been the ones addressed by Moses, and most of them would remember the striking events of their childhood.

Moreover, this personal knowledge is often appealed

<sup>1</sup> Num. 9. 1 ; Exod. 12. 1 ; Lev. 7. 38 ; 16. 1 ; 25. 1 ; 26. 46 ; 27. 34 ; Num. 1. 1 ; 3. 14 ; 33. 50 ; 35. 1 ; Deut. 1. 3 ; 4. 46 ; 29. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. 24. 15 ; Num. 9. 10 ; 15. 35 ; 27. 8 ; 36. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. 5. 3 ; 24. 9, 18, 22 ; 25. 17.

to as a special and chief reason for obeying the laws.<sup>1</sup> For instance, 'I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the Lord, . . . but your eyes have seen all the great work of the Lord which He did. *Therefore* shall ye keep all the commandments,' etc. Plainly this would have had no force in later times ; indeed it would have furnished an excuse for *not* obeying the laws, since the people of those days had no personal knowledge of the events referred to. And is it likely, we may ask, that a late author, who falsely ascribed his laws to Moses, in order to get them obeyed, should yet put into the mouth of Moses himself an excuse for not obeying them ?

(4.) *Their relation to one another.*

Now the laws profess to have been delivered mainly at two periods—near the beginning and at the end of the forty years' wanderings. And, it will be seen, the difference between the two sets of laws exactly corresponds to such a difference in date. To begin with, the laws referring to the Tabernacle, the camp, and the temporary duties of the Levites, are of course peculiar to the earlier group ; as are also numerous ceremonial and ritual laws, which would have been out of place in Deuteronomy, as that was addressed to the laity. On the other hand the laws as to the division of Canaan among the tribes, the possession of lands and houses, and the appointment of a successor to Moses, naturally belong only to the later group. Among other additions are the laws referring to apostasy among the Israelites,

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 11. 2-7 ; 4. 3-15 ; 29. 2-9.

and the admission of foreigners to the nation, both of which might be required when they became settled in Canaan.

In some cases, however, though the same laws occur in both groups, there are certain differences between them. The most important concerns the duties of Priests and Levites. In Leviticus and Numbers the tribe of Levi is divided into two parts; the sons of Aaron being *Priests*, and the rest of the tribe *Levites*. But in Deuteronomy, it is urged, this distinction is unknown; the priests are never called sons of Aaron, but are called Levites; while, on the other hand, Levites are allowed to perform priestly duties. In answer to this it must be noticed, that as Aaron was himself a descendant of Levi, all priests were, as a matter of fact, Levites. And the writer of Deuteronomy was quite able to distinguish between them when necessary; for in Deut. 18. 1-8 the first two verses are stated to refer to the *whole tribe*, the next three to the *priests*, and the last three to the *Levites*. The only difference, then, that exists is that Deuteronomy seems to recognise that Levites might perform priestly duties. But, with the doubtful exception of the above three verses, there is not a single passage in which distinctively priestly duties are assigned to those distinctively called Levites. All that we find is, that where the whole tribe is referred to the various duties are named together.<sup>1</sup>

In other cases the differences are as a rule trivial, and they often tend to prove the genuineness of the

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Deut. 10. 8.

laws. Take for instance the *slaughter of animals*.<sup>1</sup> In Leviticus every ox, sheep, or goat intended for food was to be first brought to the Tabernacle as a kind of offering, and there killed. But in Deuteronomy those living at a distance were to be allowed to kill and eat at home. The first obviously suits the circumstances of the desert, where everyone was near the Tabernacle, and the latter those of Canaan, where some were near and many at a distance. Moreover, the language of Deuteronomy shows that up till then the Levitical law had been in force; for it begins *If the place, etc.*, implying some previous prohibition. And it also implies in the following verse that the gazelle and hart were not included in this prohibition, precisely as we find them not included in Leviticus. Thus the apparent discrepancy is more like an undesigned agreement between the laws, the later one implying the existence of the earlier, which now required some modification to make it suitable to Canaan.

And exactly the same may be said as to the *list of clean and unclean animals*.<sup>2</sup> Leviticus includes among clean animals, which might be eaten, four kinds of locusts, and among unclean animals, which might not be eaten, eight creeping things, such as the weasel, mouse, and lizard, all of which Deuteronomy omits. On the other hand, the latter mentions several animals, such as the ox, sheep, and hart, which the former omits. Plainly, then, when Leviticus was written there was a lack of animal food, which might tempt the people to

<sup>1</sup> Lev. 17. 1-7; Deut. 12. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. 11.; Deut. 14.



eat locusts (permitted), or even mice and lizards (forbidden) ; while when Deuteronomy was written animal food was plentiful, and regulations as to these were wholly unnecessary. Thus the differences in the laws again correspond precisely to the different conditions of the people at the two periods.

In each of these cases, then, and they are only samples of several others, we have the same two alternatives to choose from, and no other. Either the differences result from the fact that the laws date respectively from the times they profess to, when all is plain and consistent ; or else they must be due to the carefully planned work of some late impostor ; in which case, while we admire the skill with which the fraud is executed, we cannot help wondering at its utter uselessness. Why indeed was it necessary to invent two sets of laws at all ? Surely one complete code would have been better from every point of view ? The only motive, then, that impostors could have had in inventing a double code was to give the laws the air of genuineness. And if this was their object, it must be allowed that they have thoroughly succeeded.

We have now examined the laws of the Pentateuch in a variety of aspects—as to their subject-matter, their wording, their relation to the history, and their relation to one another—and in every case with the same result. The peculiarities they present are such as can only be satisfactorily explained by their contemporary date. And it may be added, the whole of the evidence is of such a kind that the ordinary reader can judge of its value. Anyone who likes to look out

the texts for himself can form an independent opinion as to how extremely improbable it is that laws such as *these* should have been invented in after times.

(D.) THE LATE-DATE THEORY.

We pass on now to the opposite theory. This we have already alluded to when discussing the *language* of the Pentateuch, but we must examine it more in detail here, as the *laws* of the Pentateuch are thought by some critics to afford strong evidence in its favour. It is assumed, then, that at various times in the later history of Israel some scribe or prophet composed some part of the laws now contained in the Pentateuch ; but fearing that his own name would not prove of sufficient weight, he falsely ascribed them to Moses. And it is urged the discovery of the *Book of the Law* (probably Deuteronomy) in the reign of Josiah, about B.C. 621, was the actual publication of one of these frauds.<sup>1</sup>

But, it should be observed, there is no hint that the king or the people were surprised at such a book being found, but only at such things being contained in it. And as they proceeded at once to carry out the laws, it seems rather to show that they knew there was such a book all the time, only they had never before read it. And this is easily accounted for, as most copies would have been destroyed by the previous wicked kings Manasseh and Amon. On the other hand, the new invention of a hitherto unsuspected law-book could scarcely have gained such immediate and ready obedience. It may also be added that Deuteronomy is quoted twice in the previous history ; but of course

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings 22.

hostile critics say that these passages must be subsequent additions, though they scarcely appear so to the ordinary reader.<sup>1</sup> We have now to examine this *late-date* theory on its merits, first considering its extreme improbability, and then the two arguments in its favour.

(1.) *Its extreme improbability.*

Now, it is hard to over-estimate the great improbability of this theory. In the first place, it requires us to regard the authors of this legislation as *deliberate impostors*, who, knowing that the laws they invented were not Mosaic, yet falsely asserted that they were. Nor is the difficulty got over by saying that the laws date from very different times ; and that perhaps the last compiler, who may have lived at the time of the Exile, did not invent any laws himself, but merely codified and arranged previous ones. But shifting the difficulty does not remove it. Each individual law, if it falsely claims to be Mosaic, must have been invented at some time ; and spreading the origin of the laws over several centuries merely requires us to assume a large number of impostors instead of one.

Practically, then, there are but two theories to choose from—that of genuine Mosaic laws and that of deliberate forgeries. And bearing this in mind, we must ask, is it likely, or even credible, that men with such a passion for truth and righteousness as the Hebrew prophets should have spent their time in composing such forgeries, especially when the very object of many of these laws was to inculcate moral virtues ?

Secondly, they must have been *skillful* impostors ;

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 11. 2 ; 2 Kings 14, 6 ; Deut. 7, 1-4 ; 24. 16.

for, as we have seen, the laws exhibit the strongest marks of genuineness. And these are often so indirect and unobtrusive that they would not have occurred to any but the most accomplished forgers.

Thirdly, they must have been *successful* impostors, for it is undisputed that these supposed frauds were never detected. And this is the more remarkable because several of the laws were of a public character, and such as would be extremely hard to invent in after times, and yet ascribe to Moses.

While lastly, the improbability of all this is still further increased by the fact that many of the laws would have been utterly *useless* at a late period. They concerned the wilderness life of the Israelites, and would have been of no more use after the people settled in Canaan than laws concerning the Heptarchy would be at present.

What reason is there, then, for adopting a view which seems so hopelessly untenable? The answer is that, judging from the other Old Testament Books, the laws of the Pentateuch, especially those of a ceremonial character, appear to have been unknown for some centuries after the time of Moses. The evidence adduced in support of this is the *silence* of early writers as to these laws, and the observance of practices *inconsistent* with them. And we will notice each in turn.

(2.) *The argument from silence.*

In considering this, we will first take the historical and then the prophetic books; and it will be seen that none of them are really silent as to the laws,

though they do not allude to them as often as some critics might think probable. The first of the *historical* books is Joshua ; but this, though it expressly refers to written Mosaic laws,<sup>1</sup> cannot be appealed to as an independent witness, since hostile critics believe that it forms one work with the Pentateuch, so the two earliest books are Judges and 1 Samuel.

In *Judges* the references are very few,<sup>2</sup> which is not perhaps surprising considering the unsettled state of the country ; but in 1 *Samuel* they are much more numerous. Thus, from the first six chapters alone we learn that the temple of the Lord, also called the tent of meeting, was at Shiloh ; and that it contained the ark of the covenant, the cherubim, and the sacred lamp ; that the Israelites resorted thither every year for sacrifice and worship, which points to the yearly presentation of tithes and firstlings ; and that the sons of Eli offended God by their conduct in regard to the priest's portion, which implies that some different regulations, approved by God, had previously been in force.<sup>3</sup> We also learn that the priesthood of Eli and the sacrifices they offered were of Divine appointment, and dated from the time of the Exodus ; that the duties of the priests were to go up to the altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod ; that they received all the offerings made by fire ; and that the Levites carried the ark, which was one of their special duties.<sup>4</sup>

Passing on now to the *Prophets* ; two of the earliest

<sup>1</sup> Josh. 1. 7, 8, 13 ; 24. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Judges 18. 31 ; 20. 27, 28 ; 21. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Lev. 7. 28-34.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Sam. 1. 3, 24 ; 2. 12-30 ; 3. 3 ; 4. 4 ; 6. 15.

of these are Hosea and Amos. The former speaks of feasts, new moons, sabbaths, solemn assemblies, and sacrifices ; he uses such technical terms as ephod and teraphim ; he warns the people against striving with the priest ; blames them for forgetting the law of their God ; and places mercy and the knowledge of God above sacrifice and burnt-offerings. Later on he blames them again for transgressing God's covenant and His law, specially alluding to *written* laws ; asserts that their wine-offerings and sacrifices were not accepted in consequence ; and speaks of the people dwelling in tents as in the days of the solemn feast.<sup>1</sup> And very similar references are found in Amos.<sup>2</sup>

All this is abundant evidence of the existence of some established law and ritual very like what we find in the Pentateuch. And though many of the references are of a disparaging nature, this very fact that the prophets found it necessary to protest against ritual being placed above morality shows not only that the ritual then existed, but that it was believed to have had a Divine origin, which they themselves imply in some cases. And, it may be added, similar evidence is afforded by most of the other prophets. Moreover, the references are all *incidental*. The writers nowhere give a list of Mosaic laws ; the allusions to them turn up, as it were, by accident, and only because the circumstances require it. And this makes it almost certain that many other laws must have been equally well known without being alluded to at all.

<sup>1</sup> Hos. 2. 11 ; 3. 4 ; 4. 4-6 ; 6. 6 ; 8. 1, 12, 13 ; 9. 4 ; 12. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Amos. 2. 4, 11 ; 4. 4, 5 ; 5. 21-25 ; 8. 5.

The only counter-argument is from the statement in Jeremiah, that God did not command the Israelites concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.<sup>1</sup> But the context certainly implies that it was placing these before obedience that God condemned, and the passage is anyhow quite insufficient to outweigh the mass of evidence on the other side.

(3.) *The inconsistent practices.*

The most important of these were sacrificial worship not being confined to one place, and the offering of sacrifice by laymen, as well as some minor points, such as the erection of pillars. With regard to the former, the principle of both the earlier and later laws was that the place of sacrifice should be of Divine appointment, *where Jehovah had chosen to record His name*, and not selected by the worshippers themselves.<sup>2</sup> In Exodus it is naturally implied that there should be many such places, as the Israelites were then only beginning their wanderings ; and in Deuteronomy that there should be only one, as they were then about to settle in Canaan.

Now, the manner in which this place was made known was by the presence of the ark : wherever the ark was, there was the place for Divine worship. And hence when the ark was in the hands of the Philistines, the law was necessarily in abeyance. But as soon as it was recovered, the law again assumed its authority, and the sanctuary at Jerusalem claimed the same exclusive position as that at Shiloh. In later times, no doubt, the worship at *high places* was an infraction of the law ;

<sup>1</sup> Jer. 7. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. 20. 24 ; Deut. 12. 5.

but this is mentioned as a *sin*, and Hezekiah is specially commended for removing these places, and for keeping the commandments *which the Lord commanded Moses*.<sup>1</sup>

The other practice, that of laymen offering sacrifice, can generally be explained by the simple rule that acts done by subordinates are often ascribed to their superiors. Thus, at the dedication of the Temple, Solomon is said to have offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep, though they cannot have been offered with his own hands. Similarly, when David and Solomon are said elsewhere to have offered sacrifices, we may fairly assume that in most cases, at all events, they only provided and ordered them, the actual ministrants being doubtless priests. There are, it is true, some instances where the above explanations do not apply, such as those of Gideon, Samuel, and Elijah. But these were all under special and exceptional circumstances, and in some of them the offering of sacrifice was directly enjoined.<sup>2</sup>

Neither of these arguments then can be maintained, and we may therefore dismiss the *late-date* theory. It is extremely improbable in any case, and quite untenable in face of the strong evidence on the other side.

(E.) CONCLUSION.

Having now shown that both the *Histories* and the *Laws* of the Pentateuch appear to date from the time of Moses, it matters little as to who the actual writer was, though that the greater part should have been written by *Moses* himself is the most probable view. And as we have seen this is positively asserted in the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 3. 2 ; 22. 43 ; 2 Kings 18. 4-6.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, Judges 6. 26.



book itself. Moreover his frequent references to his own exclusion from Canaan seem to have a very genuine tone about them.<sup>1</sup> And so have some individual remarks when carefully considered; such as that Moses '*looked this way and that way*' before slaying the Egyptian.<sup>2</sup> Who but one, who vividly recollected the incident, would have thought it worth noting that he took such an obvious precaution? His authorship is further confirmed by the fact that so little is said in his praise. His faults are indeed narrated quite candidly, but nothing is said in admiration of the great leader's courage, ability, and character, till the closing verses of Deuteronomy. These were evidently written by someone else, and show what we might have expected had the earlier part been the work of anyone except Moses. Nor is there anything surprising in his writing in the third person, for numbers of other writers—Cæsar, for instance—have done the same.

But now comes the important point. If the Pentateuch is a contemporary document, can we dispute the miracles which it records? Can we imagine, for instance, a *contemporary* writer describing the Ten Plagues, or the passage of the Red Sea, or the rebellion of Korah, if nothing of the kind had taken place? The events, if true, must have been public, notorious, and well known at the time; and if untrue, no contemporary would have thought of inventing them. And when we add to this the fact that the accounts of some of these very miracles have as we have shown strong marks of truthfulness, it seems very difficult to deny their occur-

<sup>1</sup> E.g., Deut. 1. 37; 3. 26; 4. 21; 31. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. 2. 12.

rence. While, if they were true, it matters little whether they were evidential miracles in the strict sense, or whether, as is more likely, they were what we have called superhuman coincidences.

There is only one important argument on the other side, which is the entire absence of any *confirming* evidence from other sources. Of course, in regard to the Exodus itself, if the events were such as are recorded in the Pentateuch, the Egyptians must have been very much ashamed of themselves, and would be the last persons to refer to them. But still, considering the immense number of the Israelites, and the centuries they stayed in Egypt, we might expect to find some allusions to them on Egyptian monuments. And perhaps we shall some day, though up to the present none have been discovered that are at all conclusive.

The excavations, however, at Tel-el-Muskhuta strikingly confirm a portion of the narrative.<sup>1</sup> For this turns out to be Pithom, one of the store cities said to have been built by the Israelites ; and we now learn not only that there was such a place, and that it was a store city, evidently intended for military supplies, being near the frontier, but that it was probably founded by Rameses II., who has long been thought to be the Pharaoh who so oppressed the Israelites. And nearly its whole extent is occupied by the treasure chambers, which are divided by strong brick walls ; some of the bricks being made with straw, some with fragments of reed or stubble used instead, and some without any straw at all. And, unlike the usual

<sup>1</sup> Transactions of Victoria Institute, vol. xviii., p. 85.

Egyptian custom, the walls are built with mortar, which is expressly mentioned in the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

It must also be remembered that the subsequent history of the Israelites affords some corroborative evidence as to the Exodus. For that event occupied a unique place in the feelings, writings, and religion of the Jews. Their religion was indeed based upon it, as it comes in the very forefront of the Decalogue. Moreover, their most characteristic institution, the Passover, was directly associated with it, even in name; and it is hard to imagine how a ceremony of so striking a character and of such permanence could have been founded on mere fiction. A document might be forged, but not a memorial ordinance like this. So that even had the Pentateuch never been written, the subsequent writings and religion of the Israelites would still have formed a strong, though indirect, argument in favour of some miraculous deliverance from Egypt.

This objection, then, is quite insufficient to invalidate the strong evidence of the Pentateuch; and we therefore conclude in this chapter that it seems probable that the *origin* of the Jewish religion *was attested by miracles*.

<sup>1</sup> Exod. i. 11, 14; 5. 12.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THAT ITS HISTORY WAS ATTESTED BY MIRACLES AND PROPHECIES.

#### (A.) THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS.

Arguments for and against their genuineness.

(1.) Their alleged mistakes ; unimportant.

(2.) Modern discoveries ; have confirmed their accuracy.

#### (B.) THE JEWISH MIRACLES.

List of eight public miracles ; a single example, Elijah's sacrifice, considered in detail ; and some general remarks.

#### (C.) THE JEWISH PROPHECIES.

(1.) Prophecies ; three examples considered—the desolation of Assyria and Babylonia, the degradation of Egypt, and the dispersion of the Jews.

(2.) Predictions. List of eight important predictions ; a single example, the destruction of Jerusalem, considered in detail ; and some general remarks.

#### (D.) CONCLUSION.

The cumulative nature of the evidence.

HAVING now examined the origin of the Jewish Religion, we have next to consider its *history* ; which also claims to have been attested both by miracles and prophecies. So we will first offer a few remarks as to the *genuineness* of the Old Testament books, from Joshua onwards ; and then consider some of the events which they record.

### (A.) THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS.

Now, the chief arguments for and against the genuineness of these books are similar to those in regard to the Pentateuch, so need only be glanced at here. In favour of their genuineness we have first of all the universal tradition of the Jews, who, being the writers and custodians of these books, had the best possible means of knowing, and who revered them to such an extent that they could have had no doubt whatever as to their authenticity. Secondly, there are a variety of internal marks of genuineness, such as undesigned coincidences, and the minute and graphic manner in which several of the events are described. While lastly, there is the moral argument: many of the books, especially the Prophets, are not anonymous, but claim to have been written by certain men and at certain times. And therefore, unless genuine, they must be deliberate forgeries; executed, moreover, by men whose one object seems to have been to inculcate moral virtues, such as truthfulness.

On the other hand, the arguments against their genuineness are the antecedent one, that they record miraculous events, which is supported by the historical one, that they contain various slight inaccuracies, as well as differences in style and language. And here, as elsewhere, the former appears to be the *reason* for discrediting the books, the latter merely the *excuse*. We do not propose to examine any of these arguments in detail, but a few words may be said as to their alleged mistakes, and also as to the effect of modern discoveries.

(1.) *Their alleged mistakes.*

Now, considering the long period covered, and the variety of subjects dealt with, and often the same subject by various writers, the number of even apparent discrepancies is not very great; and it is beyond dispute that many of these can be explained satisfactorily, and doubtless many others could be so were our knowledge more complete. Moreover, they are, as a rule, quite obvious, and have not been brought to light by recent discoveries. And the fact that the scribes, who, from time to time, copied the documents, allowed these discrepancies to remain, just as they were, without attempting to reconcile them, shows with what reverence they regarded the books. It has no doubt left some blemishes in the Bible, which less scrupulous copyists might have removed; but it has added to our confidence that we have the original writings and not an 'improved' edition of them.

It is also beyond dispute that many, perhaps most, of the mistakes are *numerical* ones, such as the chronology in Kings and Chronicles, and the incredibly large numbers in some places.<sup>1</sup> But these may be due to some copyist expressing the numbers in figures, instead of, as usual, in words; and the Hebrew figures, *i.e.*, the letters used as such, are very confusing. For instance, *beth* and *caph* mean 2 and 20, while *daleth* and *resh* mean 4 and 200 respectively; and yet they are very much alike even in print, as the English reader can see in the headings of Ps. 119., R.V. Of course, when used as letters the rest of the word shows which

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, 1 Sam. 6. 19; 1 Kings 20. 30; 2 Chron. 14. 8, 9.

is intended, but when used as numbers there is no check. Moreover, a letter expressing a small number, such as 3, is converted into 3,000 by merely adding two dots. Any other mistakes there may be are only such as any good historian might make, and are quite insufficient to raise any general distrust of the books. They are mere *surface errors*, often depending on a single text or a single word, and are practically of no importance.

(2.) *The effect of modern discoveries.*

Next as to the effect of modern discoveries in Egypt, Assyria, and elsewhere on the accuracy of the Old Testament. In the case of the Pentateuch, as we have seen, there is very little direct evidence either way ; but it is otherwise with regard to some of the later books.

In the first place, and this is very important, modern discoveries have completely changed what we may call the *a priori* argument on the subject. It used to be thought that the Jews were a kind of half-savage nation, living at a time when civilisation was almost unknown, and when literary records could scarcely be expected. But we now know that it was precisely the opposite. The period of Jewish history from the time of Moses onwards was distinctly a literary age. In Egypt, Babylonia, Syria, and elsewhere it was the custom, and had been for centuries, to chronicle all important events, at least all those that were creditable to the persons concerned ; so that it is almost certain that the Jews, like the surrounding nations, had their historians. In every age conquerors have loved to record their

conquests, and why should the Jews alone have been an exception ?

And yet the historical books in the Old Testament have no competitors. If, then, we deny that they are in the main a contemporary record, we must either assume that the Jews, unlike the surrounding nations, had no contemporary historians, which is most unlikely ; or else that their works were superseded in later days by other and less reliable accounts, which were universally mistaken for the originals, and this seems equally improbable.

Passing on now to the evidence in detail, it may be divided into two classes, geographical and historical. In the first place the *geography* of Palestine has been shown to be minutely accurate. But this of itself does not prove the Old Testament Books to be authentic, but merely that they were written by Jews who knew the country intimately. It does, however, raise a presumption in favour of their genuineness, for late forgeries are extremely liable to mistakes of all kinds, while accuracy in small and unimportant details inspires confidence in a book.

And much the same may be said of the *historical* notices. The monumental records of the Kings of Judah and Israel have not at present been discovered, but we can often check the history by the records of other countries ; and these are as a rule in perfect agreement, not only as to the actual facts, but as to the society, customs, state of civilisation, etc., of the period. But this again does not prove the authenticity of the Books, though it also raises a presumption in their favour.



In some cases, however, the evidence is stronger than this, one of the best known instances being Daniel's mention of *Belshazzar*. He states that the last king of Babylon was Nebuchadnezzar's son, called Belshazzar, who was slain at night when the city was captured (about B.C. 538). But according to Berosus, who, though he only wrote in the third century B.C., was till recently our chief authority, all this appears to be wrong. The last king of Babylon was a usurper called Nabonidus, and any such person as Belshazzar is quite unknown. And so matters remained till some cuneiform inscriptions were discovered in 1854.

From these it appears that Belshazzar was the eldest son of Nabonidus, and was apparently associated with him in the government. There is no actual proof that he ever had the title of *King*, but an inscription deciphered in 1880 seems to show that he was slain at Babylon in a night assault upon the city, as described by Daniel some three months after Nabonidus had been taken prisoner, so he may have assumed the title in the interval. As to his relationship with Nebuchadnezzar we learn that the mother of Nabonidus was an important person, so she was very likely the daughter of that monarch; or possibly the usurper may have strengthened his claim by the common expedient of marrying a royal princess. In either case, Belshazzar would be a descendant of Nebuchadnezzar; and as the same word is used in Aramaic for father and grandfather (see margin of A.V.), all the apparent mistakes would vanish.

And, of course, if Daniel himself wrote the book, he

would have known all about Belshazzar, however soon afterwards it was forgotten. But, if the book was a forgery, written by a Jew in Palestine about B.C. 160, which is the rationalistic theory, as the wars between Egypt and Syria up to that date are clearly foretold, how was it that he knew the name of Belshazzar at all, or anything about him, when such a king was unknown to previous historians? Plainly, then, this is a distinct argument in favour of the contemporary date of the book.

We have now briefly indicated the reasons for thinking that the books of the Old Testament are on the whole authentic and contemporary records. What, then, is the value of the evidence they afford as to the history of the Jewish Religion having been attested by miracles and prophecies?

#### (B.) THE JEWISH MIRACLES.

And first as to the miracles, including under this term both superhuman coincidences and evidential miracles in the strict sense. They occur all through the historical books of the Old Testament; but as these cover nearly a thousand years, and presumably all important miracles are recorded, they were not of very frequent occurrence. Of course, they vary greatly in evidential value, the following being eight of the most important:—

The passage of the Jordan, Josh. 3. 14-17.

The capture of Jericho, Josh. 6. 6-20.

Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel, 1 Kings 18. 17-40.

The cure of Naaman's leprosy, 2 Kings 5. 10-27.

The destruction of Sennacherib's army, 2 Kings 19. 35.

The shadow on the dial, 2 Kings 20. 8-11.

King Uzziah's leprosy, 2 Chron. 26. 16-21.

The three men in the furnace, Dan. 3. 20-27.

We will examine a single instance in detail, and select *Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel*. This event is said to have occurred on the most public occasion possible, before the King of Israel and thousands of spectators. And as a miracle, or rather *superhuman coincidence*, it presents no difficulty whatever. The lightning which struck the sacrifice was doubtless due to natural causes; and yet, as before explained (Chapter VII.), this would not interfere with its evidential value.

Moreover, it was avowedly a test case to definitely settle whether Jehovah was the true God or not. The nation, we learn, had long been in an undecided state. Some were worshippers of Jehovah, others of Baal; and these rival sacrifices were suggested for the express purpose of settling the point. And therefore, if miracles at all are credible, there could not have been a more appropriate occasion for one; while it was, for the time at least, thoroughly successful. All present were convinced that Jehovah was the true God, and, in accordance with the national law, the false prophets of Baal were immediately put to death.<sup>1</sup>

Now, is it conceivable that any writer would have described all this, even a century afterwards, if nothing of the kind had occurred? The event, if true, must have been notorious and well known for several generations; and if untrue, no one living near the time and

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 13.

place would have ventured to fabricate it. And (what renders the argument still stronger) all this is stated to have occurred, not among savages, but among a fairly civilised nation and in a literary age.

We need not examine the other miracles in detail, since the argument is much the same in every case. They are all said to have occurred on important and critical occasions when, if we admit miracles at all, they would be most suitable. They are all said to have been *public* miracles, either actually performed before crowds of persons, or else so affecting public men that their truth or otherwise must have been notorious at the time. And they were all of such a kind that any mistake or fraud as to their occurrence was out of the question. It is, then, on the face of it, most unlikely that miracles, *such as these*, should have been described unless they were true. Indeed, if the Old Testament books were written by contemporaries, or even within a century of the events they relate, it seems almost impossible to deny their occurrence.

#### (C.) THE JEWISH PROPHECIES.

Passing on now to the Prophecies, knowledge of the future may be of two kinds, which, for the sake of clearness, we will call *Prophecy* and *Prediction*, though there is no sharp distinction between them, while in common language the former word may be conveniently used to include both. Strictly speaking, however, by a prophecy is meant a general knowledge of some future state, which is not very definite ; while by a prediction is meant a special knowledge of some particular future event, which is definite.

(1.) *Prophecies.*

We will consider the prophecies first, excluding at present those referring to the Jewish Messiah (see Chapter XIX.) ; and, as we shall see, their agreement with history seems far too exact to be accidental, while in this case it is impossible to get over the difficulty by the favourite expedient of saying that they were written *after the event*. We will select for examination those concerning the Jews themselves, and their great neighbours Assyria and Babylonia, on the one hand, and Egypt on the other. All these nations had existed for centuries, and there seems no reason why the Jewish writers should have pronounced any permanent doom on them at all, still less on their own people. But they did so, and with remarkable discrimination.

And first as to *Assyria and Babylonia*. The future of these countries was to be utter *desolation*. The kingdoms were to be destroyed, the land was to become a wilderness, and the cities to be entirely forsaken. It was not merely that the nations were to be dispossessed by others, which anyone might have anticipated, but that the land was to remain permanently desolate. We read repeatedly that it was to be desolate *for ever* ; and though this term cannot be pressed as meaning literally for all eternity, it certainly implies a long continuance.<sup>1</sup> A single passage referring to each may be quoted at length.

Zephaniah says of Assyria, ' And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria ; and

<sup>1</sup> Isa. 13. 19-22 ; 14. 22, 23 ; Jer. 50. 13, 39, 40 ; 51. 26, 37, 43 ; Nahum 3. 7 ; Zeph. 2. 13-15.

will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like the wilderness. And herds shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nation ; both the pelican and the porcupine shall lodge in the chapters thereof ' [the capitals of the fallen columns] : ' their voice shall sing in the windows ; desolation shall be in the thresholds : for he hath laid bare the cedar work. This is the joyous city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none else beside me : how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in !'

And Isaiah says of Babylon, ' And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldean's pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation : neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there ; neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there ; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures ; and ostriches shall dwell there, and satyrs [or goats] shall dance there. And wolves shall cry in their castles, and jackals in the pleasant palaces : and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.'

It seems needless to comment on prophecies so plain and straightforward. Nor need we insist at any length on their exact fulfilment ; it is obvious to everyone. For two thousand years history has verified them. The utter desolation of these countries is without a parallel : the empires have vanished, the once populous land is deserted, and the cities are heaps of ruins. In

short, the prophecies have been fulfilled in a manner which is, to say the least, very remarkable.

And next as to *Egypt*. The future foretold of this country is not desolation but *degradation*. Ezekiel tells us it is to become a *base kingdom*, and he adds, 'It shall be the basest of the kingdoms ; neither shall it any more lift itself up above the nations : and I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations.'<sup>1</sup> And here also prophecy has been turned into history. The permanent degradation of Egypt is a striking fact which cannot be disputed. When the prophets wrote, Egypt had on the whole been a powerful and independent kingdom for some thousands of years : but it has never been so since. Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Saracens, Memlooks, Turks, and we may now add British, have in turn been its masters ; but it has been the master of no one. It has never more *ruled over the nations* as it used to do for so many centuries. Its history in this respect has been unique—an unparalleled period of prosperity followed by an unparalleled period of degradation.

With such an obvious fulfilment of the main prophecy, it seems needless to insist on any of its details, though some of these are sufficiently striking. Thus Ezekiel's description of Egypt as the *basest* of kingdoms seems specially appropriate to that country, which was once ruled by a dynasty of slaves (the Memlooks). Again, we read in the next chapter, *Her cities shall be in the midst of the cities that are wasted* ; and though it is doubtful to what period this refers, yet no more accurate

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. 29. 15 ; 30. 7, 13.

description can be given of the present cities of Egypt, such as Cairo, than that they are in the midst of the cities that are wasted, such as Memphis, Bubastis, and Tanis. And a few verses farther on we read, *There shall be no more a prince out of the land of Egypt*; and yet, when this passage was written, there had been independent Egyptian sovereigns from the very dawn of history; but there have been none since. Stress, however, is not laid on details like these, some of which are admittedly obscure, such as the forty years' desolation of the land with the scattering of its inhabitants,<sup>1</sup> but rather on the broad fact that Egypt was not to be destroyed like Assyria and Babylonia, but to be *degraded*, and that this has actually been its history.

Lastly, as to the *Jews*. Their future was to be neither destruction nor degradation, but *dispersion*. This is asserted over and over again. They were to be scattered among the nations, and dispersed through the countries; sifted among all nations; tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth; and scattered among all peoples from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth.<sup>2</sup>

And here again history has exactly coincided with prophecy. The fate of the Jews has actually been dispersion, and this to an extent which is quite unique. First of all, the ten tribes were carried away to Nineveh and scattered among other nations, into which they were gradually absorbed, and thus destroyed. And

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. 29. 11-13; 30. 23, 26.

<sup>2</sup> Lev. 26. 33; Deut. 4. 27; 28. 25, 64; Neh. 1. 8; Jer. 9. 16; Ezek. 22. 15; Amos. 9. 9.



the remaining tribes, though reinstated in their own country after the Babylonian captivity, were subsequently dispersed to an even greater extent when Jerusalem was taken by the Romans, though, strange to say, not in this case losing their nationality. And so they have remained ever since. The Jews are still everywhere, though the Jewish nation is nowhere. They are present in all countries, but with a home in none, having been literally *scattered among the nations*.

There is, however, this difficulty. Though dispersion is everywhere foretold as the fate of the Jews, yet the *details* mentioned are sometimes only applicable to the earlier dispersion, and sometimes only to the later. And these details are often so mixed together in the prophecies that it is not easy to separate them. Indeed, but for this we should have called them predictions, for the details, considered separately, have been most strikingly fulfilled either in the one case or in the other. But it is only fair to remember that dispersion is not foretold simply as a future event, but as a punishment on the Jews for their sins ; and therefore different parts of the nation may have deserved it, and received it at different times and with different details, though all are mixed together in the prophecies.

With regard to these details, two points are specially emphasised in the latter part of Deut. 28., and they both refer to the later dispersion alone. The first is the terrible strictness of the previous *siege*, which forced the wretched inhabitants to cannibalism of the most revolting kind, mothers eating their own children. And this, as we learn from Josephus, actually occurred

during the Roman siege. It is true that it also occurred during the siege of Samaria, centuries before ; but as that was a complete failure, and ended in the triumph of the inhabitants, it cannot be the one intended.<sup>1</sup> Josephus also mentions that after the Roman siege the number of Jews sold for slaves was so great that there was a difficulty in finding purchasers, and that many of them were sent to the mines in Egypt ; both of which points seem alluded to in the prophecy.

The second is the great and long continued *sufferings* which the Jews were to undergo in their dispersion. They were to become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all people. Their curses were to be upon them for a sign and for a wonder, and upon their seed for ever. The plagues of themselves and of their seed were to be wonderful, even great plagues and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses and of long continuance. They were to find no ease nor rest for the sole of their foot, but were to have a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and pining of soul, and their life was to hang in doubt night and day. And yet in spite of all this, they were still to remain distinct. They, and their seed *for ever*, were to be a separate people, a sign and a wonder at all times. And here again the event is as strange as the prophecy. Nowhere else shall we find a parallel to it. For centuries the Jews have been a scorn and reproach among other nations. They have, justly or unjustly, been subject to civil disabilities and religious persecutions. They have been driven from kingdom to kingdom, and have lived in daily fear of

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings 6. 28. Josephus, Wars, vi. 3, 8, 9.

their lives. And yet all the time they have remained a separate people. They have not been merged into other nations, but, as said before, have been literally *scattered among them*.

Now, what conclusion can be drawn from all these prophecies, so clear in their general import, so distinctive in their character, so minute in many of their details, so unlikely at the time they were written, and yet one and all so exactly fulfilled? There seem to be only three alternatives to choose from. Either these prophecies must have been random *guesses*, which seems incredible; for such guesses do not, as a rule, come true. Or else they must have been due to deep *fore-sight* on the part of the writers, which seems equally incredible; for the writers had had no experience of the permanent desolation of great empires like Assyria and Babylonia, while as to the fate of Egypt and the Jews themselves history afforded no parallel. Or else, lastly, the writers must have had *revealed* to them what the future of these nations would be; in which case, and in which case alone, all is plain.

(2.) *Predictions.*

We pass on now to the predictions. These are found all through the Old Testament, the following being eight of the most important.

The fact that David's throne should always be held by his descendants, *i.e.*, till the captivity, about 450 years;<sup>1</sup> and its fulfilment is specially remarkable when contrasted with the rival kingdom of Samaria, where the dynasty changed eight or nine times in 250 years.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. 7. 12-17; 1 Kings 9. 4, 5.

The division of the kingdom into ten and two tribes, evidently announced at the time, since Jeroboam had to flee, and apparently the reason why the rebels were not attacked.<sup>1</sup>

The destruction, rebuilding, and final destruction of the Temple; the first of these predictions being so publicly made that it caused quite a commotion.<sup>2</sup>

The destruction of the altar at Bethel, which was set up as a rival to that at Jerusalem; publicly announced some centuries before, including the name of the destroyer.<sup>3</sup>

The destruction of Israel by the Assyrians.<sup>4</sup>

The destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.<sup>5</sup>

The captivity of the Jews, including its duration of seventy years, their most unlikely restoration, and the name of the restorer.<sup>6</sup>

The wars between Egypt and Syria.<sup>7</sup>

We will, as before, examine a single instance in detail, and select that referring to the *destruction of Jerusalem*. And we have chosen this because it is connected with two of the miracles already alluded to, which we will glance at in passing.

Now it will be remembered that after a good deal of fighting, probably lasting for some years, Sennacherib advanced to attack Jerusalem; and he then publicly, and in the most insulting manner, defied the God of Israel to deliver the city out of his hand (about

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 11. 30, 40; 12. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. 26. 8-16; Isa. 44. 28; Dan. 9. 26.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings 13. 2; 2 Kings 23. 15, 16.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Kings 14. 15; Isa. 7. 8, 9; 8. 4.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Kings 20. 17.      <sup>6</sup> Jer. 29. 10; Isa. 44. 28.      <sup>7</sup> Dan. 11.

B.C. 701).<sup>1</sup> We then read how Isaiah declared that God accepted the challenge, and would defend Jerusalem, and would not allow it to be destroyed. And the sacredness of the city is very strongly emphasised. For instance, 'The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn, the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee,' and a great deal more to the same effect, ending with the emphatic assertion by Jehovah, '*I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.*'

Now it is inconceivable that such a passage could have been written after Jerusalem had been totally destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (about B.C. 586) or even after it had been captured by him (B.C. 598).<sup>2</sup> There is of course no real inconsistency in God's preserving Jerusalem in the one case, and not in the other; for Nebuchadnezzar is always represented as being, though unconsciously, God's servant in punishing the Jews; while Sennacherib openly defied Jehovah.

After this comes the sudden destruction of the Assyrian army (probably by pestilence) in a single night; and the extreme fitness of such a miracle, or superhuman coincidence, after Sennacherib's challenge must be obvious to everyone. Moreover, such a public and notorious event, if untrue, could not have been invented till long afterwards; and yet, as we have just shown, the narrative could not have been written long afterwards. Sennacherib does not of course allude to it himself in his inscriptions, for kings never like to record their own defeats; but this is no reason for

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings 18. 17; 19. 34.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 24. 13; 25. 9.

doubting that it occurred, more especially as it is confirmed by the Babylonian historian Berosus.<sup>1</sup>

We next read that *in those days* (most critics think this was *before* Sennacherib's final attack on Jerusalem) Hezekiah was seriously ill, and on being told of his unexpected recovery, he naturally asks for a *sign*; and then in accordance with his demand the shadow on the dial goes back ten *steps*. The dial appears to have been a flight of steps, with some object on the top which threw a shadow on a gradually decreasing number of these as the sun rose, and a sudden subsidence of the ground at one end, due perhaps to an earthquake, would quite account for the shadow going back and again covering some steps it had left. The event seems to have attracted considerable attention, since messengers came from Babylon to inquire about it (so it evidently was not noticed there, and must have been due to some local cause) and to congratulate the king on his recovery.<sup>2</sup> And here again we may ask, how could any writer have asserted all this, even a century afterwards, if no such sign had occurred?

We are then told that Hezekiah showed these messengers all his treasures; and this leads up to Isaiah's strange *prediction* that these treasures should be carried away and Jerusalem destroyed by these very Babylonians, who were then a small and friendly power, and apparently, as we learn from their own inscriptions, seeking an alliance with Hezekiah against their great

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Pinche's *Old Test. in Light of Historical Records*, 1902, p. 378.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Chron. 32. 24, 31.

and common enemy Assyria. This prediction is introduced in the most natural way possible as a rebuke to the king for his ostentatious display; and it seems almost incredible to consider it a later insertion. And yet the event could not have been humanly foreseen. For Babylon was then but a small nation, shortly to be absorbed into Assyria, and only when it reasserted its independence a century later did it become powerful enough to have caused any fear to the Jews.

It will not be necessary to discuss the other predictions at length, since that they all refer to the events in question is generally admitted. Indeed, in some cases, owing to the mention of names and details, it cannot possibly be denied. And therefore, of course, those who disbelieve in prediction have no alternative but to assert that they were all written *after* the event.

At this lapse of time it is difficult to prove or disprove such a statement. But it must be remembered that to assert that any apparent predictions were written after the event is not merely to destroy their superhuman character, and bring them down to the level of ordinary writings, but far below it. For ordinary writings do not contain wilful misstatements, and yet every pretended prediction written after the event cannot possibly be regarded in any other light. The choice then lies between *real predictions* and *wilful forgeries*. There is no other alternative. And bearing this in mind, we must ask, is it likely that men of such high moral character as the Hebrew prophets should have been guilty of such gross imposture? Is it likely that, if guilty of it, they should have been able to palm it off

successfully on the whole Jewish nation? And is it likely that they should have had any sufficient motive to induce them to make the attempt?

Moreover, many of these predictions are stated to have been made *in public*, and to have been notorious and well known long before their fulfilment. And it is hard to see how this could have been asserted unless it was the case, or how it could have been the case unless they were superhuman.

It should also be noticed that in Deuteronomy the occurrence of some definite and specified event is given as the *test* of a prophet, and the later prophets appeal to this very test. Thus Isaiah challenges the false prophets to foretell future events, and repeatedly asserts that this was the mark of a true prophet.<sup>1</sup> And it seems inconceivable that men should thus court defeat by themselves proposing a test which would have shown that they were nothing more than impostors; and yet this would have been the case if all their so-called predictions had been uttered after the events.

Lastly, it is important to notice what we may call the *moral* aspect of these predictions. Their object was not to satisfy mere curiosity as to the future; they had a very different purpose. The prophet and the teacher were then combined, and the predictions were, as a rule, only a means of enforcing moral truths, especially God's overruling providence in the affairs of men. And therefore in almost every case the *reason* why the event was to come was foretold as plainly as the event itself. And prophecy thus became the interpreter of history,

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 18. 22; Isa. 41. 22; 44. 8; 48. 3-5; see also Deut. 13. 1-3.



showing the Jews what were the objects God had in view in the various events which befell them.

And it has this moral use still. For though it is a truth of Natural Theology that God governs the world, and carries out His purposes in the history of men just as much as in the course of nature, yet it is a truth likely to be forgotten. And the history of the Jews enforces it on us in an instructive manner. We here see what we may call a small *sample* of the world's history, annotated by God Himself, with His object in bringing about every important event announced beforehand; this prior announcement being, of course, necessary to show that they were really God's purposes, and not the subsequent guesses of men.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

In concluding this chapter, we must notice the *cumulative nature* of the evidence. The instances we have enumerated of miracles and prophecies are but specimens, a few out of many which might be given. This is very important, and its bearing on our present argument is naturally twofold.

In the first place, it does not at all increase, and in some respects rather decreases, the difficulty of believing them to be genuine. Thirty miracles or prophecies, provided they occur on suitable occasions, are scarcely more difficult to believe than three. And the number recorded in the Old Testament shows that, instead of being mere isolated marvels, they form a complete series. Their object was the gradual instruction of the Jews, and through them of the rest of the world, in the great truths of Natural Theology, such as the existence

of One Supreme God, who was shown to be *All-Powerful* by the miracles, *All-Wise* by the prophecies, and *All-Good* by His rewarding and punishing men and nations alike for their deeds. And it may be added many who now believe Natural Theology alone, and reject all revelation, would probably never have believed even this but for the Bible.

On the other hand, the number and variety of these alleged signs increase the difficulty of any *other* explanation to an enormous extent. Thirty miracles or prophecies are far more difficult to *disbelieve* than three. A successful fraud might take place once, but not often. An imitation miracle might be practised once, but not often. Spurious prophecies might be mistaken for genuine once, but not often. And yet, if none of these signs are true, such frauds and such deceptions must have been practised, and practised successfully, over and over again. In short, the Old Testament must be a collection of the most dishonest books ever published, for it is full of miracles and prophecies from beginning to end ; and it is hard to exaggerate the immense *moral* difficulty of accepting such a view. Many of the Jewish prophets, as before said, inculcate the highest moral virtues ; and the Jewish religion, especially in its later days, is admittedly of high moral character. It seems, then, to be almost incredible that its sacred writings should be merely a collection of spurious predictions uttered after the event and false miracles which never occurred. We therefore decide in this chapter that it seems probable that the *history* of the Jewish religion *was attested by miracles and prophecies*.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THAT THEREFORE THE JEWISH RELIGION IS PROBABLY TRUE.

#### (A.) THE CHARACTER ASCRIBED TO GOD.

- (1.) Mental difficulties, or anthropomorphism ; but we must use *representative terms* when speaking of the Deity, and the writers quite understood the terms to be such.
- (2.) Moral difficulties ; since God is represented as approving of wicked men, ordering wicked deeds, and sanctioning wicked customs ; but these objections are not so great as they seem.
- (3.) Counter-arguments. The Jews firmly believed in Monotheism, and had the highest mental and moral conception of the Deity ; so that their religion was Natural Theology, only with certain additions.

#### (B.) CONCLUSION.

The Jewish Religion is probably true.

WE have been considering in the previous chapters several strong arguments in favour of the Jewish Religion. Before concluding we must of course notice any *adverse* arguments which we have not already examined. There is only one of any importance, which refers to the Character ascribed to God, and as this is often thought to be a great difficulty, we must examine it at some length.

(A.) THE CHARACTER ASCRIBED TO GOD.

The objections may be conveniently classed under the two heads of mental and moral; and having discussed these, we will see what can be said on the other side.

(1.) *Mental difficulties.*

The objection here is that the Jewish idea of God is very *anthropomorphic*, the Deity being represented as a great Man, with human form, feelings, attributes, and imperfections. Thus He has hands and arms, eyes and ears; He is at times glad or sorry, angry or jealous; He moves about from place to place; and sometimes repents of what He has done, thus showing, it is urged, a want of foresight on His part. All this is plainly inconsistent with the character of the immaterial, omnipresent, omniscient God of nature. The answer to this objection is twofold.

In the first place, it is almost impossible for the human mind to form any conception of the Deity which is not to some extent anthropomorphic, which merely means human. For a moment's reflection will show that we are bound to use what we have called *representative terms* when speaking of the Deity. And if such terms are used at all, those drawn from human analogies are not only the easiest to understand, but are also the least inappropriate, since, as we have shown, man resembles God in that he is a personal and moral being; and therefore likening God to man is not so degrading as likening Him to natural forces. Such expressions, then, must always be considered as descriptions drawn from human analogies which cannot be pressed literally.

While, secondly, it is plain that the Jewish writers themselves so understood them, for they elsewhere describe the Deity in the most exalted language, as will be shown later on. And this is strongly confirmed by the very remarkable fact that the Jews, unlike other ancient nations, had no material idol or representation of their Deity. Inside both the tabernacle and the temple there was the holy of holies with the mercy-seat, but no one sat on it. An empty throne was all that the shrine contained. Their Jehovah was essentially an invisible God, who could not be represented by any human or other form; and this alone seems a sufficient answer to the charge of anthropomorphism.

(2.) *Moral difficulties.*

Next as to the *moral* difficulties. Many of these depend on single texts, or doubtful passages; so they need scarcely be examined; but there are at least three of a more general character. These are that God is frequently represented as approving of wicked men, at other times as ordering men to commit wicked deeds, and even in His own laws as sanctioning wicked customs. We will consider these points in turn.

And first as to His *approving of wicked men*; that is, of men who committed the greatest crimes, such as Jacob and David. This is easily answered, since approving of a man does not involve approving of *everything* he does. The case of David affords a convincing example of this; for though he is represented as a man after God's own heart, yet we are told that God was so extremely displeased with one of his acts that He punished him for it severely in causing his

child to die. In the same way no one supposes that God approved of Jacob because of his treachery, but in spite of it. Moreover, in estimating a man's character, his education and surroundings have always to be taken into account. If the conduct of one man living in an immoral age is far better than that of his contemporaries, he may be worthy of commendation, though similar conduct at the present day might not deserve it.

And if it be asked what there was in the character of these men, and many others, to counterbalance their obvious crimes, the answer is plain: it was their intense and unfaltering belief in the spiritual world. The existence of One Supreme God, and their personal responsibility to Him, were realities to them all through life; and therefore, in spite of many faults, they were, on the whole, worthy of commendation.

Next as to God's *ordering wicked deeds*. In all cases of this kind it is important to distinguish between a man's personal acts and his official ones. At the present day the judge who condemns a criminal and the executioner who hangs him are not looked upon as murderers. And the same principle applies among uncivilised nations. If the ruler of the country decides that a man is worthy of death, and thereupon sends someone to kill him, his doing so is not a murder in the ordinary sense. It is merely carrying out the command of the sovereign, which may or may not be justified. Now in the Old Testament the Israelites are represented as living under the immediate rule of God. He was their true Sovereign, and therefore when a man,

or body of men, had to be punished for their crimes, He commanded some prophet or king, or perhaps the whole people, to carry out the sentence. And of course, if they failed to do so, even from kindness of heart, they were blamed, just as we should blame a hangman at the present day who failed to do his duty.

Bearing this in mind, we will now consider the example most often objected to, that of the *extermination of the Canaanites*. Here, it is urged, God ordered the Israelites to make an unprovoked and murderous attack on some neighbouring tribes, and evidently approved of their doing so. But as far as the *Canaanites* were concerned, there is very little doubt that they thoroughly deserved their fate. They appear to have practised every form of wickedness; and though of course only the adults could have been guilty, it would have been no kindness to save the children if all the adults were killed. While, as nations were then in a constant state of hostility, there was nothing unusual in commencing war without waiting, as at present, for some convenient pretext.

And then as to the *Israelites*. It is clearly laid down that they were only acting as God's ministers, and they were told so in the plainest terms; while they were warned that if they behaved as badly as the Canaanites, God would have them exterminated too.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the destruction of the whole people was a valuable *object-lesson*, showing the abhorrence God had for such wickedness. Thus the Israelites were deeply impressed with the guilt of sin, and with faith in the true God

<sup>1</sup> E.g., Lev. 18. 28; Deut. 9. 5.

who alone enabled them to overcome their enemies, as well as being preserved from their evil influence. And if God wished to establish them as the guardians of the true religion, these were the very points they had to be taught. On the whole, then, they were merely God's agents in carrying out a command which was highly beneficial to themselves, and probably not unjust to their enemies. And viewed in this light, the difficulty is greatly reduced, even if it does not disappear altogether.

Lastly, as to God's *sanctioning wicked customs*. The most important is that of *human sacrifice*; but it is extremely doubtful whether the passages relied on do sanction this custom;<sup>1</sup> since it is clearly laid down elsewhere that the firstborn of *men* are never to be sacrificed, but are always to be redeemed. While human sacrifices among other nations are strongly condemned, in one passage Jehovah expressly saying that they were not to be offered to Him.<sup>2</sup> It is, however, further urged that we have two actual instances of such sacrifices in the case of Isaac and Jephthah.<sup>3</sup>

But with regard to *Jephthah*, he evidently had no idea when he made his vow that it would involve the sacrifice of his daughter. Having made it, however, he determined to keep it; and during the two months which intervened no one seems to have tried to dissuade him from it. This certainly shows that human sacrifices were not regarded with the same abhorrence

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 22. 29, 30; Lev. 27. 28, 29.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. 13. 13; Num. 18. 15; Deut. 12. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 22; Judg. 11. 39.



then as they are now ; but it does not show that they were ever ordered by God, or in any way acceptable to Him.

In the case of *Isaac* we have the one instance in which God did order a human sacrifice ; but this is worthless as an argument, since He specially intervened to prevent the order being carried out. And the whole affair, the command and the counter-command, must of course be taken together. It was required to test Abraham's faith to the utmost, and therefore as he most valued his son he was ordered to offer him. And as children were then universally regarded as property, and at the absolute disposal of their parents, the command, however distressing to his heart, would have formed no difficulty to his conscience. But when his faith was found equal to the trial, God interposed, as He had of course intended doing all along, to prevent Isaac from being actually slain. We have hence no instance of a deliberate human sacrifice in the whole course of Jewish history before or after the Exodus, and this is an additional reason against interpreting these doubtful laws as if they ordered such sacrifices.

With regard to the other practices, such as *slavery*, *polygamy*, and *trial by ordeal*, it is undisputed that they were recognised by the Mosaic laws, and also that they are quite opposed to our modern ideas of right and wrong. But it must be remembered that none of these practices were instituted by the laws. The Pentateuch neither commands them nor commends them ; it merely mentions them, and, as a rule, to

guard against their abuse. Take, for instance, the case of slavery. The custom was, and had been for ages, universal. All the Mosaic laws did was to recognise its existence and to provide certain safeguards, making kidnapping, for instance, a capital offence.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, many *worse customs* existed at the time which the Jewish laws did rigorously forbid,<sup>2</sup> so that the case then stands thus : At the time of the Exodus society was in an extremely low moral state. Many of its worst customs were absolutely forbidden by the laws ; others were sanctioned, though in a mitigated form. While at the same time a code of morals was introduced, summed up in the Decalogue, of such excellence that it has been practically accepted by the civilised world.

(3.) *Counter-arguments.*

Having now discussed these alleged mental and moral difficulties at some length, it is only fair to see what can be said on the other side. And much indeed may be said ; for the Jewish conception of the Deity, when considered as a whole, and apart from these special difficulties, was one of the loftiest ever formed by man.

To begin with, the Jews firmly believed in *Monotheism*, or the existence of One Supreme God. This was the essence of their religion. It is stamped on the first page of Genesis ; it is implied in the Decalogue ; it occurs all through the historical books ; and it is emphasised in the Psalms and Prophets.

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 21. 16.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Lev. 18-20.

They were never without it, and it made them into a nation. And in this respect the Jews stood alone among the surrounding nations. Some others, it is true, believed in a God who was more or less Supreme ; but they always associated with him a variety of lesser deities, which really turned their religion into Polytheism. With the Jews it was not so. Their Jehovah had neither rivals nor assistants. He was the one and only God ; and as for the so-called gods of other nations, they looked upon them as either non-existent or utterly contemptible, and even ridiculed the idea of their having the slightest power.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, the great problem of the *Existence of Evil* never led the Jews, as it did some other nations, into Dualism, or the belief in an independent Evil Power. Difficult as the problem was, the Jews never faltered in their belief that there was but One Supreme God, and that therefore everything that existed, whether good or evil, existed by His permission, and was in a certain sense His doing.<sup>2</sup> But this is not all, for the Jews ascribed to this Supreme God the very highest attributes. His name, Jehovah or *I Am*, implied the Self-Existent One, and they exhausted language to proclaim His excellence.

They described Him as *Omnipotent* ; the Creator, Preserver, and Possessor of all things, the Cause of all nature, the Sustainer of all life, Almighty in power, and with whom nothing is too hard.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 4. 39 ; 1 Kings 18. 27 ; 2 Kings 19. 15-18 ; Ps. 115. 4-8.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. 45. 7 ; Prov. 16. 4 ; Job 2. 6 ; Exod. 3. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 1. 1 ; Neh. 9. 6 ; Gen. 14. 22 ; Amos 5. 8 ; Job 12. 10 ; 1 Chron. 29. 11 ; Jer. 32. 17.

They described Him as *Omniscient* ; infinite in understanding, wonderful in counsel, perfect in knowledge, the Designer of all nature down to its smallest details, knowing and foreknowing even the thoughts of men.<sup>1</sup>

They described Him as *Omnipresent* ; filling Heaven and earth, yet contained by neither, existing everywhere, and from Whom escape is impossible.<sup>2</sup>

They described Him as *Eternal* ; the Eternal God, the Everlasting God, God from everlasting to everlasting, Whose years are unsearchable, the First and the Last.<sup>3</sup>

They described Him as *Unchangeable* ; the same at all times, ruling nature by fixed laws, and with whom a change of purpose is impossible.<sup>4</sup>

And lastly, they described Him as in His true nature *Unknowable* ; far above human understanding, a hidden God, and showing but the outskirts of His ways.<sup>5</sup> This will be enough to show the lofty *mental* conception which the Jews formed of the Deity. And it may be added, after more than twenty centuries of progress, we cannot improve upon it at the present day.

But now for their *moral* conception. They believed their God to be not only infinite in power and wisdom, but also, what is more remarkable, they ascribed to

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 147. 5 ; Isa. 28. 29 ; Job 37. 16 ; Prov. 3. 19 ; Ps. 94. 9 ; Ezek. 11. 5 ; Ps. 139. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. 23. 24 ; 1 Kings 8. 27 ; Prov. 15. 3 ; Ps. 139. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. 33. 27 ; Gen. 21. 33 ; Ps. 90. 2 ; Job 36. 26 ; Isa. 48. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Mal. 3. 6 ; Ps. 148. 6 ; Num. 23. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Job 11. 7 ; Isa. 40. 28 ; 45. 15 ; Job 28. 14.

Him the highest moral character. It is needless to quote texts here, as the fact is indisputable. He was not only a *beneficent* God, Whose blessings were unnumbered, but He was a *righteous* God also. His very Name was Holy, and His hatred of evil is emphasised all through to such an extent that at times it forms a difficulty, as in the extermination of the Canaanites. Thus the *goodness* they ascribed to God was a combination of beneficence and righteousness very similar to what we discussed in Chapter V.

Moreover, in this respect the God of the Jews was a striking contrast to the gods of the surrounding nations. We have only to compare Jehovah with Moloch and Baal, or with the Egyptian gods, Ptah and Ra, or with the classical gods, Jupiter and Saturn, and the superiority of the Jewish conception of the Deity is beyond dispute. In particular it may be noticed that other nations had the revolting habit of ascribing sexuality to their deities. Even the gods they worshipped as more or less supreme always had their female companions. Thus we have Baal and Astaroth, Bel and Istar, Osiris and Isis, Zeus and Hera, Jupiter and Juno, and numbers of others. It is needless to point out how easily such an idea led to immorality being mixed up with religion, a vice from which the Jews were absolutely free.

Nor can it be said that this high conception of the Deity was confined to the later period of Jewish history. For the above texts have been purposely selected from all through the Old Testament, and even Abraham, the remote ancestor of the Jews, seems to

have looked upon it as axiomatic that Jehovah, the *Judge of all the earth*, should *do right*.<sup>1</sup> No wonder, then, believing in such a perfect Being as this, the Jews, in contrast with most other nations, thought that their first and great commandment was to *love* God rather than to fear Him, that they were each individually responsible to Him for their conduct, and that every sin was a sin against God, Who was a searcher of hearts and the impartial Judge of all men.<sup>2</sup> So much, then, for the Jewish conception of the Deity when considered as a whole and apart from special difficulties.

Now what is all this but to say that the Jewish God, Jehovah, was the true God, the God of Natural Theology, the Being Who is All-Powerful, All-Wise, and All-Good, and Whose existence and attributes have been discussed in the earlier chapters of this *Essay*. In short, the Jewish Religion was Natural Theology, with some additional, though not inconsistent, rites ; and this cannot be said of other ancient religions.

And it may be noticed in passing that Natural Theology also has its moral difficulties, since such events as earthquakes and plagues have often been urged against the goodness of God with much greater force than anything which occurs in the Bible. But in each case we infer God's character from the vast majority of facts, and then try to find some explanation for the small minority. And, as we have seen, such

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 18. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. 6. 5 ; Eccles. 12. 14 ; Gen. 39. 9 ; 1 Chron. 28. 9 ; Job 34. 19.

explanations are not, as a rule, hard to find in regard to the moral difficulties of the Old Testament. While few will deny that the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, with all its so-called moral defects, has done more to improve the lives of men than any other book which was ever written.

The idea, then, that the character ascribed to God in the Old Testament renders the Jewish religion incredible, or even improbable, is out of the question. Difficulties there may be here and there, but they sink into utter insignificance when contrasted with the moral excellence ascribed to God in so many places. And yet strange to say the Jews were not a more advanced nation than those around them. On the contrary in the arts both of peace and war they were vastly inferior to the great nations of antiquity, but in their conception of the Deity they were vastly superior; or, as it has been otherwise expressed, they were men in religion though children in everything else.

And this appears to many to be a strong argument *in favour* of their religion. For unless it was revealed to them by God Himself, how did the Jews alone among ancient nations arrive at the true conception of the Deity? And unless they were in some peculiar sense God's people, how is it that they alone worshipped Him? And this argument is strongly confirmed by their remarkable history; for the Jews are anyhow *a unique nation*. For centuries, though scattered throughout the world, they have been held together by their religion. If this was, as far as it went, the true religion, the fact is to some extent explicable;

but if their religion was nothing better than other ancient and false religions, it is hopelessly inexplicable.

Moreover it is undeniable that their early history, either real or supposed, has exerted a greater influence on the world for the last thousand years than that of all the great nations of antiquity put together. And it is equally undeniable that this influence has been on the whole for good. Millions of men have been helped to resist sin by the Psalms of David, and the stories of Elijah, Daniel, etc., over whom the histories of Egypt and Assyria, Greece and Rome, have had no influence whatever. And the *effect* of the Religion being thus unique, raises a presumption that its *cause* may have been unique also ; in other words that it may have been divinely revealed.

(B.) CONCLUSION.

It is scarcely necessary to give a summary of the arguments in this Part. Suffice it to say that in the previous chapters we have shown that there are strong reasons for thinking that the account of the *Creation* was divinely revealed ; that the *origin* of the Jewish religion was attested by miracles ; and that its *history* was attested both by miracles and prophecies. And it should be noticed, each of these arguments is independent of the others. We have not, for instance, assumed the Divine origin of the religion, when arguing about its history, or either of these when discussing the first chapter of Genesis. Thus the evidence is all cumulative, and far more than sufficient to outweigh the antecedent improbability of the religion, which is the only



important argument on the other side ; for the difficulties discussed in this chapter are comparatively trivial. Moreover, we know so little as to why man was created, or what future God intended for him, that it is not easy to say whether the religion is so very improbable after all. On the other hand, the evidence in its favour is plain, direct, and unmistakable. And we therefore decide that the *Jewish Religion is probably true.*

## PART III.

### *THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.*

CHAP. XIII. THAT THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS CREDIBLE.

„ XIV. THAT THE FOUR GOSPELS ARE AUTHENTIC FROM  
EXTERNAL TESTIMONY.

„ XV. THAT THE GOSPELS ARE AUTHENTIC FROM INTERNAL  
EVIDENCE.

„ XVI. THAT THE GOSPELS ARE AUTHENTIC FROM THE EVIDENCE  
OF THE ACTS.

„ XVII. THAT THEREFORE THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS  
PROBABLY TRUE.

„ XVIII. THAT THE OTHER NEW TESTAMENT MIRACLES ARE  
PROBABLY TRUE.

„ XIX. THAT THE JEWISH PROPHECIES CONFIRM THE TRUTH OF  
CHRISTIANITY.

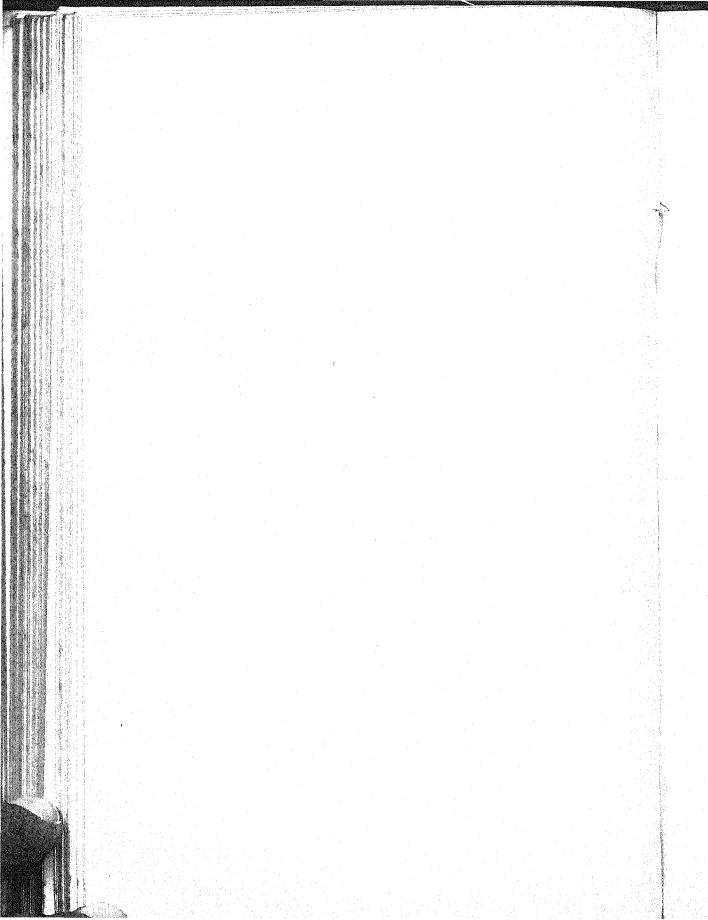
„ XX. THAT THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST CONFIRMS THE TRUTH  
OF CHRISTIANITY.

„ XXI. THAT THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY ALSO CONFIRMS  
ITS TRUTH.

„ XXII. THAT ON THE WHOLE THE OTHER EVIDENCE SUPPORTS  
THIS CONCLUSION.

„ XXIII. THAT THE THREE CREEDS ARE DEDUCIBLE FROM THE  
NEW TESTAMENT.

„ XXIV. THAT THEREFORE THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN  
RELIGION IS EXTREMELY PROBABLE.



## CHAPTER XIII.

### THAT THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS CREDIBLE.

By the Christian Religion is meant the Three Creeds.

(A.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

- (1.) Its meaning ; Three Persons in One Nature.
- (2.) Its credibility ; in some respects more probable than simple Theism.

(B.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION.

- (1.) The philosophical objections, not insuperable.
- (2.) The alleged motive ; God, it is said, loves man, and wishes man to love Him, and this is not improbable for several reasons.

(C.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT.

The common objections do not apply because of the *willingness* of the Victim.

- (1.) As to the Victim ; this does away with the injustice.
- (2.) As to the Judge ; it appeals to His mercy not justice.
- (3.) As to the sinner ; it has no demoralising tendency.

(D.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION.

- (1.) Christ's resurrection ; not incredible, for we have no experience to judge by.
- (2.) Man's resurrection ; not incredible, for the same body does not involve the same molecules.

(E.) CONCLUSION.

Four important considerations which show that the Christian Religion, though improbable, is certainly not incredible.

We pass on now to the Christian Religion, by which we mean the facts and doctrines contained in the *Three*

*Creeeds*, commonly, though perhaps incorrectly, called the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian. And, of course, before discussing the evidence for and against its truth, we must first consider whether it is credible; so in this chapter we shall deal chiefly with objections to Christianity. Now its four great and characteristic doctrines are those of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection; and we will examine each in turn, and then conclude with a few general remarks.

(A.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

To begin with, the Christian religion differs from all others in its idea of the nature of God. According to Christianity, the Deity exists in some mysterious manner as a *Trinity of Persons* in a *Unity of Nature*; so we will first consider the meaning of *Trinity* and then its credibility. It is not, as some suppose, a kind of intellectual puzzle, but a statement which, whether true or false, is fairly intelligible. Provided, of course, due attention is given to the meaning of the words employed.

(1.) *Its meaning.*

In the first place, we must carefully distinguish between *Person* and *Substance*; this is the key to the whole question. The former has been already considered in Chapters III. and IV., the latter is a difficult term to define, and is rather misleading, since it is not the modern English word, but a translation of a Latin word, which would be better rendered by *nature* or *essence*. But though difficult to define, its meaning is tolerably clear. Take, for instance, though the analogy

must not be pressed too far, the case of three men ; each is a separate *person*, but they all have a common human *nature*. This human nature, which may also be called human substance (in its old sense), humanity, or manhood, has of course no objective existence apart from the men whose nature it is ; it is merely *that* which they each possess in common, and the possession of which constitutes each a man. And hence, any attributes belonging to human nature as such would belong to each of the three men, so that each would be mortal, each subject to growth, etc., each would in fact possess the complete human nature, and yet together there would not be three human natures, but only one.

Bearing this in mind, let us now turn to the Athanasian Creed. The doctrine of the Trinity is stated in vv. 3-6, which are as follows :—

3. 'The Catholic Faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity.

4. 'Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.

5. 'For (*i.e.*, because) there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.

6. 'But (on the other hand) the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.'

Here, it will be noticed, vv. 5 and 6 give the *reasons* for v. 4, so that the Godhead in v. 6 is, as we should have expected, equivalent to the Divine *Substance* or Nature in v. 4. Thus the meaning is as follows :—

We must worship one God (as to Nature) in Trinity

(of Persons) and Trinity (of Persons) in Unity (of Nature); neither confusing the Persons, for each is distinct; nor dividing the Nature, for it is all one.

Thus far there is no intellectual difficulty in the statements of the creed. We do not mean that there is no difficulty in believing them to be true, or in accurately defining the terms used; but that, as statements, their meaning is quite intelligible.

We now pass on to the following verses which are deductions from this, and show that as each of the three Persons possesses the Divine Nature, all attributes of the Deity (*i.e.*, of this one Divine Nature) are possessed by each of the three. Each is therefore *eternal*, and yet there is only *one* eternal nature. But it is the short and abrupt manner in which this is expressed that constitutes the chief difficulty in the creed. And even grammatically the verses from their extreme brevity are not very clear. For the various terms *uncreate*, *incomprehensible* (*i.e.*, boundless, or omnipresent), *eternal*, *Almighty*, *God*, and *Lord* are used as if they were adjectives in the first part of each sentence, and nouns in the latter part.

But we must remember these verses do not stand alone. As just said, they are deductions from the previous statement of the doctrine of the Trinity; and, therefore, they must in all fairness be interpreted to agree with that doctrine, and not to contradict it. And the previous verses (3-6) show clearly that where *three* are spoken of, it refers to persons; and where *one* is spoken of, it refers to substance or nature. And of course the same applies to all the attributes, including

*God* and *Lord*, though the statements here are often thought to be a contradiction in terms. But this is not the case. For the Creed nowhere asserts that there are three Gods and yet but one God, which would be a contradiction in terms. What it does say is that there are Three Persons, each of whom is God, and yet but one God ; and though this statement, *if it stood alone*, might be thought unintelligible, yet considering the position it occupies in the Creed its meaning is quite clear. God is Three in regard to Personality, and One in regard to Nature.

While, however, admitting that this is the undoubted meaning of all these verses, it is important to add that the words seem to imply some closer union between the Divine Persons than that of merely possessing in common one Divine Nature. And, therefore, the human analogy before considered is misleading in some respects. Moreover, three men do not make up the whole of humanity, but the three Divine Persons do make up the whole of the Godhead. In the same way the *names* given to these Divine Persons are not independent proper names like those of different men or of heathen gods, each of whom might exist separately ; but they are all *relative* names, each necessarily implying the others. Thus the Father implies the Son, for Fatherhood would be meaningless without Sonship ; similarly the Son implies the Father, and the Spirit implies Him whose Spirit He is.

And though these names are no doubt very inadequate, for human language is but the record of human experience, and is therefore unable to express that of



which we have no experience whatever, such as the nature of God ; yet as far as they go they convey the idea of the Divine Persons being of the *same* Nature or Substance, which is the all-important point. We conclude then that the Doctrine of the Trinity means the existence of three Divine Persons, each possessing in its entirety the one Divine Nature, and closely united together in an unknown, but not therefore incredible manner.

Before passing on it may be mentioned that numerous analogies from nature have been suggested for the doctrine of the Trinity. Perhaps one of the least inadequate is that of solar *light*, *colour*, and *heat*. Each is in a certain sense solar radiance, and each is different from the others ; and yet they are so closely united that together they form but one radiance. Each is also co-extensive with the others in time and space. There never was a time when there was sunlight without colour and heat ; and if one is eternal and omnipresent, so are the others. Each is also in its true nature unknowable, and each is, as a rule, invisible. But just as solar colour may be manifested to us as the rainbow at a particular time and place, and yet be omnipresent all the time, so Christians believe that God the Son was manifested to the world at a particular time and place, yet remaining omnipresent all the time. And just as heat, though invisible, pervades the whole universe, and is the source of all life, so Christians believe that the Holy Spirit, though invisible, is omnipresent, and, as the Creed says, the Giver of Life. And the analogy could be illustrated in many other details if necessary.

(2.) *Its credibility.*

Having now discussed the meaning of the Christian doctrine, we have next to consider its credibility. It must of course be admitted that the doctrine is very mysterious, and though fairly intelligible as a doctrine, is extremely hard to realise (and some might say inconceivable) when we try to picture to ourselves what the doctrine actually means. But we must remember that the nature of God is anyhow almost inconceivable, even as simple Theism. This has been already considered in Chapter III., where we showed that though we had ample means of knowing what God was *in His relation to us* as our Creator and Judge, yet as to His real nature we knew next to nothing. Nor is this surprising when we remember that the only being who in any way resembles God is man; and that man's nature, notwithstanding our opportunities of studying it, still remains a mystery.

Now Christianity does attempt to state what the Deity is *in Himself*, and apart from His relation to us; and that this should be to a great extent inconceivable to our minds seems a necessity of the case. Indeed, any doctrine as to the nature of God which we could thoroughly understand would be self-condemned, for an Infinite Being must be to a great extent beyond human understanding. The mysteriousness of the Christian doctrine is therefore, if we may use the expression, befitting the mysteriousness of its Subject. And it is certainly not incredible on this account.

But next we must ask, is the Trinitarian doctrine really more difficult to believe than the Unitarian?

There are certainly some reasons for thinking the contrary, for Unitarianism has been well described as the easiest Religion to get, but the hardest to keep. On the other hand, the doctrine of the Trinity is addressed *to the reason*; it requires thinking about and studying, but when carefully considered, it seems to many to be less difficult to believe than simple Theism.

In the first place, the Christian doctrine meets to a great extent what is perhaps the chief difficulty of Theism, that of conceiving of an Infinite God who is yet *Personal*. For, as shown in Chapter III., personality seems to imply a limitation and separation of some kind; and therefore an eternal Person would require something else eternal, from which he is separated; and 'Natural Theology cannot supply this, though Christianity can.' In other words, on the Trinitarian hypothesis God is complete in Himself, and contains in His own Being all that is needed for His own perfection; whereas, on the Unitarian theory we have either a solitary Being dwelling alone from all eternity, or else we must make the universe itself eternal to be His companion.

And both these theories have enormous difficulties. Take for instance the attributes of *Power* and *Wisdom*, both of which, as we have seen, are necessarily involved in the idea of a Personal Being, able to design. How could a solitary God dwelling alone before the Creation of the world have been able to exercise either His Power or His Wisdom? As far as we can judge there could have been no object for either. His Will could

have produced nothing, His Reason could have thought of nothing. He would have been a *potential* God only, with all His capacities unrealised. And when carefully considered, such a view seems quite incredible. And yet the only other alternative requires not only that the world itself should be eternal ; but makes it in reality as necessary to God as God is to the world ; and this is hardly a satisfactory theory.

Nor is it in any way an adequate one. For though a material universe, existing eternally, might supply an object for God's Power and Wisdom, yet as we have seen God possesses *moral* attributes as well, such as Goodness. He is in fact a Moral, as well as a Personal Being. And all moral attributes—everything connected with right and wrong—can only be thought of as existing between two *persons*. We cannot be good to an atom of hydrogen, or unjust to a molecule of water. We can it is true be kind to *animals*, but this is simply because they resemble personal beings in having a capacity for pleasure and pain, and (probably) free will. But moral attributes in their highest perfection can only exist between two persons. And therefore as the eternal God possesses, and must always have possessed, such attributes, it seems to require some other eternal *Person*. And yet the idea of there being another God is scarcely conceivable ; so we can only conclude (however hard it may be to realise) that there must be more than one Person within the God-head itself.

The argument is no doubt a difficult one to follow, but a single example will help to explain it. Take

for instance the attribute of *love*. This, unless it is merely self-love, necessarily implies plurality—a person to love, and a person to be loved. So that if love has always been an attribute of the Deity, it necessitates some other Eternal, and therefore Divine, Person to be loved. And yet, when once we understand, even partially, the meaning of the term God, His omnipresence and omnipotence, it seems impossible that there can be more than one. We seem then forced into this dilemma : we must believe in a plurality of Eternal Persons, and yet in but one God ; and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in Unity seems the least difficult explanation.

But this is not all, for Natural Theology itself leads us to look upon the Deity in *three* distinct ways. We may think of Him as the Eternal, Self-Existent One, the Absolute and Unconditioned of modern philosophy. Or we may think of Him as the Creator and Evolver of the Universe, the Upholder of each planet, the Designer of each plant ; the Being by Whom the world was made, and Who perhaps will one day be its Judge. Or, again, we may think of Him in His relation to ourselves as a Divine Spirit, holding intercourse with our spirits, and speaking to us by our conscience. And yet our reason compels us to acknowledge that the Divine Persons we thus contemplate are but one God. And what is this but the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in Unity ?

Or, to otherwise express it, according to philosophy, the Deity is a *Transcendent* God, dwelling apart from Nature, above and beyond the world. According to

science, He is an *Immanent* God, dwelling within Nature, the Omnipresent but Unknown Power which is everywhere working. The former corresponds to the mechanical idea of the universe, regarding God as a Being who long ago made a perfect world, and has since left it to itself ; the latter to the organic idea, regarding God as still acting throughout the universe. Both ideas may be illustrated by human analogy, for our spirit both transcends matter, being above and distinct from our bodies, and is also immanent in matter. The former view leads to what is called *Deism*, the latter to *Pantheism* in its higher forms. And considering how strong a hold both these doctrines have had on the human mind in all ages, there is doubtless some truth in each. Christianity alone unites the two doctrines, and declares that God is both Transcendent and Immanent, as well as bearing some close relationship to ourselves, being in fact immanent in *man* as well as in Nature, of which our conscience is a perpetual witness.

Or, to repeat it once more in a slightly different form : there are, as is well known, three main arguments in favour of the existence of God. The first, or that from *Causation*, is derived from the universe requiring an external cause to account for it, and leads to the God of Philosophy. The second, or that from *Design*, leads to the ever-active God of Nature. While the third, or *Moral* argument, leads to the God of Conscience. Now each of these arguments has been already considered in Chapters I., II., and V., and each appears to be sound, and to require a distinct Divine

Person ; and yet it is obvious all the time that there can be but one God. And what, again, is this but the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in Unity : the Father the Source of all, the Son by Whom all things were made, and the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits ; and yet not three Gods, but one God ? It is not, of course, meant that the God of Philosophy, of Nature, and of Conscience correspond accurately with the Three Persons of the Christian Trinity, still less that the Christian doctrine could have been derived from any such speculations ; but merely that when the two are compared there is seen to be a certain harmony between them.

On the whole, then, we decide that the Doctrine of the Trinity is certainly credible and perhaps slightly probable ; for to put it shortly, Nature forces us to believe in a personal God, and yet the idea of a personal God, who is only one Person, is scarcely tenable from a philosophical standpoint.

(B.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION.

We next come to the doctrine of the Incarnation, which however is so clearly stated in the Athanasian Creed, that its meaning is quite plain. God the Son, we are told, the second Person of the Trinity, was pleased to become Man and to be born of the Virgin Mary, so that He is now both *God* and *Man*. He is God (from all eternity) of the Substance or Nature of His Divine Father, and Man (since the Incarnation) of the Substance or Nature of His human Mother ; complete God and complete Man ; equal to the Father as concerning His Godhead (for He is of the same

Nature) and inferior to the Father as concerning His Manhood (for human nature is necessarily inferior to the Divine). Moreover, though He possesses these two Natures, they are not changed one into the other, or confused together, but each remains distinct, though both are united in His One Person. This is in brief the doctrine of the Incarnation, and we will first consider some philosophical objections, and then its alleged motive.

(1.) *The philosophical objections.*

The first objection is that the Incarnation would be a *change* in the existence of God, Who is the changeless One. He, it is urged, is omnipresent and always the same, whereas an Incarnation would imply that at some particular time and place a momentous change occurred, and for ever afterwards God became different from what He had been for ever before.

This is no doubt a serious difficulty. All that can be said on the other side is practically this, that we have no adequate means of judging. The Creation of the world, it must be remembered, brought the Deity into relation with time and place; for He originated it at a certain definite time, and in a certain definite place. And the same applies to the creation of man. And perhaps if we knew more of the Nature of God, and also of the nature of man, we should see that it was just as natural for God to become Man, as it was for God to create Man. We have really nothing to argue from. An Incarnation seems improbable, and that is all we can say. But if it took place at all, there is nothing surprising in this planet



being the one chosen for it. Indeed, as far as we know, it is the only one that could be chosen, since it is the only one which contains personal and moral beings in whom God could become incarnate.

The second objection is, that the Incarnation would lead to a *compound Being*, who is both Divine and human at the same time, and this is inconceivable. But here the answer is obvious, and is suggested by the Athanasian Creed. Man himself is a compound being; he is the union of at least two incongruous parts, a material body and an immaterial spirit, in a single person. And the Incarnation in which Christians believe is the union of the Divine Nature and the human nature in a single Person. Both appear equally improbable to all antecedent reasoning; but as the one is actually true, the other is certainly not incredible.

The third and last of these objections refers to the miraculous *Virgin-birth*. But if we admit the possibility of an Incarnation, no method of bringing it about can be pronounced incredible. The event, if true, is necessarily unique, and cannot be supposed to come under the ordinary laws of nature. While considering that one object of the alleged Incarnation was to promote moral virtues in man, such as purity, the virgin-birth was most suitable, and formed an appropriate beginning for a sinless life.

(2.) *The alleged motive.*

But we now come to a more important point, for the Incarnation, if true, must have been the most momentous event in the world's history; and can we imagine a sufficient reason for it? God we may be sure does

not act without motives, and can we suggest an adequate motive for the Incarnation? Now the alleged motive, indeed the fundamental axiom of Christianity, is that God *loves* man, and as a natural consequence wishes man to love Him. Is this then incredible, or even improbable? Certainly not, for several reasons.

To begin with, we have already shown that God is a Personal and Moral Being, Who cares for the welfare of His creatures, more especially for man. And this, allowing for the imperfection of human language, may be described as God's *loving* man, since disinterested love for another cannot be thought an unworthy attribute to ascribe to the Deity. On the other hand, man is also a personal and moral being, able to some extent to reciprocate God's love. And to this must be added the fact that man, at least some men, do not seem altogether unworthy of God's love, while we certainly do not know of any other being who is more worthy of it.

Moreover, considering the admitted resemblance between God and man, the analogy of human parents loving their children is not inappropriate. Human parents often love their children intensely, and will sometimes even die for them; while, as a rule, the better the parents are the more they love their children, and this in spite of the children having many faults. Is it, then, unlikely that the Creator may love His children also, and that human love may be but a reflection of this—a further application of the admitted law that man is made in the image of God? The evidence

we have may be slight, but it all points in the same direction.

Now, if it be granted that God loves man, we have plainly no means of estimating the *extent* of this love. But by comparing the other attributes of God, such as His wisdom and His power, with the similar attributes of man, we should expect God's love to be infinitely greater than any human love ; so great indeed that He would be willing to make any sacrifice in order to gain what is the object in all love, that it should be returned. Might not then God's love induce Him to become Man, that He might the better win man's love ?

And it must be remembered that man's love, like his will, is *free*. Compulsory love is in the nature of things impossible, and therefore God cannot force man to love Him, He can only induce him ; and what inducement can be suggested more powerful than the Incarnation ? For it shows, as nothing else can show, that God's love is a self-sacrificing love ; and this is the highest form of love. Indeed, if it is not so, in other words, if God's Goodness costs Him nothing, it is in this respect *inferior* to that of many men. But if, on the other hand, God's love involved self-sacrifice ;—if it led to the Incarnation and the Atonement—then it is the highest possible form of love. And then we see that God's attributes are all, so to speak, on the same scale ; and His Goodness is as far above any human goodness, as the Power which rules the universe is above any human power ; or the Wisdom which designed all nature is above any human wisdom. Moreover a self-sacrificing love is the form which of all others is most likely to lead to its being

reciprocated. And experience proves that this has actually been the case. The condescending love of Christ in His life, and still more in His death, forms an overpowering motive which, when once realised, has always been irresistible.

But more than this. Not only does the Incarnation afford the strongest possible motive for man to love God, but it *enables* him to do so in a way which nothing else could. Man, it is true, often longs for some means of intercourse or communion with the Deity, but yet this seems impossible. The gulf which separates the Creator from the creature is infinite, and can never be bridged over by man, or even by an angel or other intermediate being. For a bridge must of necessity touch *both sides* ; so if the gulf is to be bridged over at all, it can only be by One Who is at the same time both God and Man. Thus the Incarnation brings God, if we may use the expression, within measurable distance of man, so that the latter has no mere abstract and invisible Being to love, but a definite Person, Whose Character he can appreciate and Whose conduct he can to some extent follow. In short, the Incarnation presents man with a worthy Object for his love and devotion, and yet with an Object Whom he can partly at least understand and partly imitate. And he is thus able to become in a still truer sense a *child of God*, or, as it is commonly expressed, God became Man that man might become as far as possible like God.

And this leads us to another aspect of the Incarnation. Christ's life was meant to be an *example* to man, and it is clear that a *perfect* example could only be

given by a Being who is both God and Man. For God alone is above human imitation, and even the best of men have many faults ; so that from the nature of the case, Christ, and Christ alone, can present us with a perfect example, for being Man He is capable of imitation, and being God He is worthy of it.

Now what follows from this ? If Christ's life was meant to be an example to man, it was essential that it should be one of *suffering*, or the example would have lost more than half its value. Man does not want to be shown how to live in prosperity, but how to live in adversity, and how to suffer patiently. The desertion of friends, the malice of enemies, and a cruel death are the occasional lot of all mankind. They are perhaps the hardest things a man has to bear in this world, and they have often had to be borne by the followers of Christ. Is it incredible, then, that He should have given them an example of the perfect way of doing so ; gently rebuking His friends, praying for His murderers, and acting throughout as only a perfect man could act ? Of course it may be said that such a life and death are degrading to the Deity ; and no doubt they seem so at first sight. But, strictly speaking, suffering, if borne voluntarily and for the benefit of others, is not degrading, especially if the benefit could not be obtained in any other way.

When we consider all this, it is plain that many reasons can be given for the Incarnation. Of course it may be replied that they are not adequate ; but we have no means of knowing whether God would consider them adequate or not. His ideas are not like

ours ; for what adequate motive can we suggest for God's creating man at all, let alone all the lower animals ? But yet He has done so. And having created man and given him free will, and man having misused his free will, all of which is admitted, that God should endeavour to redeem man cannot be thought incredible. Indeed it seems almost due to Himself that He should try and prevent His noblest work from being a failure. And if in addition to this God loves man still, in spite of his sins, then some intervention on his behalf seems almost probable. And God may thus have designed the Incarnation, leading up to the Atonement, as a *remedy* for man's sin. And assuming man to retain his free will, and not to be obliged to forsake sin, the remedy has doubtless been as successful as possible.

And thus the Incarnation removes any remaining difficulty that may be felt in regard to God's permitting evil to enter the world ; since He foresaw not only the disease but its remedy, and in due time brought it about. This is, of course, only one reason for the Incarnation, and had man never sinned it would probably have taken place. It was, as the Creed says, *for us men*, and not merely *for our salvation*, that Christ came down from heaven ; and it is unreasonable to think that the benefits of the Incarnation, such as uniting the human nature to the Divine, showing man what God is, and what he himself ought to be, are all the result of man's sin. But if an Incarnation for sinless men would be credible, still more is it so for sinners, who are in such need of help and guidance.

It may still be objected that if the foregoing reasons

are really sufficient to account for the Incarnation, it ought to have taken place near the commencement of man's history. And no doubt when we contemplate the great antiquity of man, stretching back into neolithic and palæolithic times, this often seems a great difficulty. But we have in reality very little to judge by, and that little does not support the objection. For in nature God seems always to work by the slow and tedious process of evolution, not attaining the results He wished for all at once, but by gradual development. And, therefore, it is only natural that if He revealed Himself to man, it should be by the same method—at first indistinctly—*Natural Religion*, which in its elementary stage certainly dates back to neolithic times (perhaps earlier), as the burial customs show a belief in a future life; then more clearly—the *Jewish Religion*; and finally by becoming Man Himself—the *Christian Religion*.

According to Christianity, the whole previous history of the world was really a preparation for the Incarnation. But only when the preparation was complete, *when the fulness of the time came*, as St. Paul expresses it,<sup>1</sup> did it take place. And it has certainly proved, as we should have expected, an epoch-making event. In all probability the history of the world will always be considered relatively to it in years B.C. and A.D. And very possibly it has a significance far beyond man or even this planet. For we must remember man is not merely a link in a series of created beings indefinitely improving, in which case no doubt in future ages an

<sup>1</sup> Gal. 4. 4.

Incarnation in man would appear as improbable as we should now think an Incarnation in one of the lower animals. But (as shown in Chapter IV.) there are strong reasons for thinking that man is the *end* of the series, the last stage in creation, the highest organized being that will ever appear on this planet, or, as far as we know, on any planet.

And, therefore, man's rank in the universe cannot be determined by the size and situation of this earth. Where else shall we find a personal and moral being with attributes superior to those of man? Where else indeed shall we find a personal or moral being at all? The only answer science can give is *nowhere*. But if so, man's position in the universe is one of unique pre-eminence. And when we consider God the Son as the Divine Person who is specially *immanent* in nature, and who has been evolving the universe through countless ages from its original matter into higher and higher forms of life, there seems a special fitness in its leading up to such a climax as the Incarnation; when by becoming Man He united Himself with matter in its highest and most perfect form. Thus the Incarnation like the Copernican system of astronomy, or the theory of Evolution, if once accepted, throws a new light on the entire universe. On the whole, then, we decide that the doctrine is certainly not incredible, though it is no doubt improbable.

(C.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT.

The Christian doctrine of the Atonement is that Christ's death was in some sense a sacrifice for sin, and thus reconciled (or made 'at-one') God the



Father and sinful man. And though not formally stated in the Creeds, it is implied in the words, *Was crucified also for us*, and *Who suffered for our salvation*.

The chief objections to the doctrine are of course on moral grounds. The idea of atonement, it is said, or of one man being made to suffer as a substitute for another, and thus appeasing the Deity, was well-nigh universal in early times, and is so still among savage nations. Such a sacrifice, however, is a great injustice to the *victim*; it ascribes an unworthy character to God, as the *Judge*, Who it assumes can be satisfied with the punishment of an innocent man in place of the guilty one; and is demoralising to the *sinner*, on whose behalf the sacrifice is offered, allowing him to sin on with impunity, provided he can find another substitute when needed.

The answer to this objection is, that it takes no account of the most important item in the Christian doctrine, which is the *willingness* of the Victim. According to Christianity, Christ was a willing Sacrifice, a self-offered Victim, who freely laid down His life.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the human sacrifices above alluded to were not willing sacrifices. The victims had no option in the matter; nor indeed need they have had, as the principle of substitution does not require a voluntary sufferer, but only a sufferer. We will now see what difference this willingness of the victim makes in regard to the victim himself, the judge, and the sinner.

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, John 10. 18.

(1.) *As to the Victim.*

It is plain that his willingness does away with the injustice altogether. There is no injustice in accepting a volunteer for any painful office, provided he thoroughly knows what he is doing, for he need not undertake it unless he likes.

(2.) *As to the Judge.*

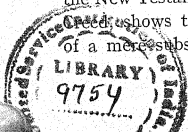
Next it will be seen that the willingness of the victim changes the manner in which the sacrifice appeals to the judge. A mere *substitution* sacrifice appeals to his sense of *justice*, and endeavours to satisfy it by giving, as far as possible, a literal fulfilment of justice, modified only in the one respect of the punishment not being borne by the guilty person.

But a *willing* sacrifice appeals not to his justice, but to his *mercy* ; it endeavours, so to say, to stimulate this element of mercy and to soften his heart. That it would have this effect in human cases is almost certain. If a judge had before him a criminal who well deserved punishment, but a good man, perhaps the judge's own son, came forward, and not only interceded for the prisoner, but was so devotedly attached to him as to offer to bear his punishment, this would certainly influence the judge in his favour. It would show that he was not so hopelessly bad after all, and the judge would feel somewhat softened towards him, and more inclined to be merciful. Justice and mercy then, though hard to reconcile, are both facts of human nature ; and it is also a fact of human nature, that the voluntary suffering, or willingness to suffer, of a good man for a criminal whom he deeply

loves, does incline man to mercy rather than justice.

Now, have we any reason for thinking that God also combines, in their highest forms, these seemingly inconsistent attributes of justice and mercy? Certainly we have; for, as shown in Chapter V., Natural Theology, not to mention the Jewish religion, leads us to ascribe to God precisely such a combination. As there shown, the suffering in this world forces us to conclude that the *goodness* of God is not simple *beneficence*, but beneficence combined with some other attribute which we called *righteousness*. And these general terms, when applied to the special case of judging sinners, closely correspond to mercy and justice. God, as we have seen, combines both these attributes, and a combination of both is required by the Christian doctrine. Mercy alone would have forgiven men without any atonement; justice alone would not have forgiven them at all. But God is both merciful and just, and therefore the idea that voluntary atonement might possibly incline Him to mercy rather than justice does not seem incredible.

And this is precisely the Christian doctrine. The mercy of God the Father is called out towards sinful man by Christ's generous sacrifice of Himself on man's behalf; so that, to put it shortly, *God forgives sins for Christ's sake*. And it should be noticed the idea of sins being *forgiven* which occurs all through the New Testament, and is alluded to in the Apostles' Creed, shows that Christ's Atonement was not that of a mere substitute, for then no forgiveness would



have been necessary. If, for example, I owe a man a sum of money, and a friend pays it for me, I do not ask the man to forgive me the debt ; I have no need of any forgiveness. But if, instead of paying it, he merely intercedes for me, then the man may forgive me the debt for my friend's sake. And this corresponds to this aspect of the Christian doctrine ; for the Atonement, like the Incarnation, is a many-sided doctrine, which can be regarded from various points of view.

It may still be objected that however noble it may have been for Christ to have offered Himself as a sacrifice for man, it hardly seems right for the offer to have been *accepted*. But here we must remember the mysterious union which exists between the Persons of the Trinity. It is the Son Himself who, in a certain sense, by virtue of His union with the Father, both offers and accepts the offer. While on the other hand, the love of the Father in giving His Son to be a sacrifice for man is emphasised in Scripture, just as much as the love of the Son in voluntarily becoming that Sacrifice. The love of the Father for sinful man was the *cause*, and not the effect of Christ's Atonement.

Of course it may be said that this is only shirking a difficulty by having recourse to mysteries. But the answer is obvious. The mystery of the Atonement is an essential part of the doctrine. Christians do not believe in an atonement effected by anyone who was not both God and Man. On the contrary, they assert that no one else could have effected it. It is the position which Christ occupies towards God on the

one hand as being His eternal Son, and towards mankind and the world on the other, as being in a special sense their Creator and Maintainer, which renders Him the only possible Mediator between the two. And therefore in discussing the Christian doctrine, we cannot argue as if He were only a man. To do this would be to destroy its *naturalness* altogether.

One more point has to be noticed under this head. Christ, by His Incarnation, became, in a unique sense, the *Representative* of mankind, since it was human nature and not a human person that He then united to Himself. In the case of ordinary men, this nature is inherited from their parents and developed round a new person ; but in the case of Christ it was inherited from His mother and developed round the pre-existing Person of the Son of God, so that His human nature as such was impersonal. In other words, to quote the Nicene Creed, Christ became *Man*, not *a man*. And the distinction is important, for had He been *a man*, He could not have represented *all* men. But by His taking human nature in the abstract, as we may call it, He represented, as no one else could, the entire race, and He suffered as such ; so that to this extent there was a kind of fulfilment of justice. Thus, on the whole, though Christ did not, strictly speaking, bear man's *punishment*, His sufferings and death procured man's *pardon* ; He suffered on our behalf, though not in our stead.

(3.) *As to the sinner.*

Lastly, as to the effect of the willingness of the victim on the sinner. Of course, on the mere substitution

theory, justice would be satisfied, and a criminal might sin on as much as he liked, provided he could be sure of finding another substitute when necessary. But if the changed attitude of the judge is due, not to his justice being satisfied, but to his mercy being stimulated, this is plainly conditional on a *moral change* in the criminal himself. A good man suffering for a criminal would not alter our feelings towards him if he obstinately chose to remain a criminal. And this is in exact harmony with the Christian doctrine, which is that sinners cannot expect to avail themselves of Christ's Atonement if they wilfully continue in sin ; so that repentance is a *necessary* condition of forgiveness. This, it is plain, destroys altogether the objection that an atoning sacrifice has an immoral tendency on the sinners themselves ; it has precisely the opposite effect.

And what we should thus expect theoretically is amply confirmed by experience. No one will deny that Christians in all ages have embraced the doctrine of the Atonement with the utmost devotion. They have asserted that it is the cause of all their joy in this world and all their hope for the next. And yet, so far from having had a bad influence, it has led them to the most noble and self-sacrificing lives. It has saved them from *sin*, and not only from the penalties of sin, and this is exactly what was required. The enormity of man's sin, and the misery it causes in the world, are but too evident apart from Christianity. And the Atonement was a 'vast remedy for this vast evil.' And if we admit the end, that man had to be redeemed from sin, impressed with the guilt of sin, and helped to resist sin,

we cannot deny the suitableness of the means, which, as a matter of fact, has so often brought it about. This completes a brief examination of the moral objections to the Atonement; and it is clear that the *willingness* of the Victim makes the whole difference, whether we regard them as referring to the Victim himself, the Judge, or the sinner.

(D.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION.

The last great Christian doctrine is that of the Resurrection. According to Christianity, all men are to rise again, with their bodies partly changed and rendered incorruptible; and the Resurrection of Christ's Body was both a pledge of this, and also to some extent an example of what a risen body would be like. He was thus, as the Bible says, the *firstborn* from the dead.<sup>1</sup> Now this word *firstborn* implies, to begin with, that none had been so born before, the cases of Lazarus, etc., being those of *resuscitation* and not *resurrection*; they lived again to die again, and their bodies were unchanged. And it implies, secondly, that others would be so born afterwards, so that our risen bodies will resemble His. We will therefore consider first Christ's Resurrection, and then man's resurrection.

(1.) *Christ's Resurrection.*

Now according to the Gospels, Christ's Risen Body combined material and immaterial properties in a very remarkable manner. Thus He could be touched and eat food, and yet apparently pass through closed doors and vanish at pleasure; and this is often thought to be incredible. But though we know very little about *semi-*

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 15. 20; Col. 1. 18; Rev. 1. 5.

*spiritual* substances, that little is enough to show that the doctrine is not incredible. For the nearest approach to one of which we have any scientific knowledge is the luminiferous æther, and this also seems to combine spiritual and material properties in a remarkable manner, being in some respects more like a solid than a gas. And yet it can pass through all material substances, and allows them to pass through it without any appreciable resistance. This fact certainly prevents us from saying that it is incredible that Christ's semi-spiritual body should pass through closed doors.

Moreover, as regards His vanishing, the literal words are, *He ceased to be seen by them*, so that His appearances and disappearances may not have been caused by His moving at all, but merely by His becoming visible or not to their eyes. And here again there is nothing incredible. Man, we know, does not see all that is to be seen even in nature, *e.g.*, the ultra-violet rays. And a slight alteration in the waves of light coming from a body would make it visible or not to the human eye ; and it is out of the question to say that a spiritual body could not possibly produce such a change at pleasure.

It may of course be replied that these phenomena, though not perhaps incredible, are still most improbable ; and no doubt they are. But what then ? We have no adequate means of judging, for the fact if true is necessarily unique. It implies a *new* mode of existence, which is neither spiritual nor material, and of which we have no experience whatever. And therefore until we receive new powers of apprehension, we are naturally unable to understand what it is like. But



assuming the resurrection of Christ to be otherwise credible, as it certainly is if we admit His Incarnation and death, we cannot call it incredible merely because the properties of His risen body are alleged to be different from those of ordinary human bodies, and in some respects to resemble those of spirits. It is in fact only what we should expect.

(2.) *Man's Resurrection.*

Next as to man's resurrection. The Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the *body* must not be confused with the immortality of the *spirit*, discussed in Chapter V., which is common to many religions, and is certainly not improbable. But two objections may be made to the resurrection of the body.

The first is that it is *impossible*, since the human body decomposes after death, and its molecules may be subsequently incorporated into other bodies. And thus, if all men were to rise again at the same time, the same molecules might have to be in two places at once. But the fallacy here is obvious, for the molecules composing a man's body are continually changing during life, and it is probable that every one of them is changed in a few years; and yet the identity of the body is not destroyed. This identity consists not in the identity of the molecules, but in their relative position and numbers; so that a man's body is in this respect like a whirlpool in a stream, the water composing which is continually changing, though the whirlpool itself remains. This removes at once the apparent impossibility of the doctrine.

Secondly, it may still be objected that the doctrine is

extremely *improbable*. No doubt it seems so. But once more we have no sufficient data from which to judge. Certainly, that a man who has once lived should be raised to life again is not antecedently more improbable than that he should have lived at all. Indeed the origin of life seems of the two to be the more mysterious. Again, apart from experience, what extreme improbability there would be that a seed when buried in the ground should develop into a plant ; or that plants and trees after being apparently dead all through the winter should blossom again in the spring. Thus the whole phenomena of life are so mysterious that we can decide nothing *a priori*, and experience must be our only guide. And therefore we cannot say what may or may not happen at some future time, of which we have no experience whatever. Indeed, if man's spirit is immortal, the fact that it is associated with a body during its existence on this earth makes it not unlikely that it will be associated with a body of some kind during its future existence.

And then as to the *condition* of man's risen body, that it should be partly spiritual, and thus resemble Christ's risen body, is distinctly probable. And just as man's body in this life is suited to his surroundings, so we may infer that his risen body will be suited to his surroundings hereafter ; though, not knowing what they will be like, we cannot say what his body will be like. But we may be sure of this : the infinite resources of the God of Nature are not baffled by the grave. His Power and Wisdom know no limits ; and He will be able, if He wishes it, to provide man with a body which,

having no tendency to decay, will be a suitable instrument for the noblest exertions of his mind and will. However, we need not pursue this subject, since the Creeds say nothing about the condition of the resurrection body.

Nor do they say anything as to the position of the future *heaven*. It may be on some other planet, where God is pleased to specially manifest His presence, and where the phenomena of sin, pain, and death are unknown. Or it may be the name for some unseen spiritual state, into which Christ passed when He left this earth, and into which the righteous will pass after the Judgment. And the existence of such a state, perhaps pervading the whole universe, is certainly not incredible. Indeed, the luminiferous æther, not to mention the Röntgen rays, should convince us that our senses are not able to perceive everything that exists, even in our immediate vicinity. While as to *everlasting life*, when man is not only perfect in himself, and lives in perfect surroundings, but enjoys the immediate presence of God, as well as the society of the perfect, there is nothing inconceivable in his being able to live for ever in perfect happiness. The final state of the *righteous* then presents little difficulty, but what about that of the *wicked*? This is admitted by all to be a most difficult subject, but as Christians themselves are not agreed about it, and we shall have to discuss it fully in Chapter XXIII., we need not consider it at present.

(E.) CONCLUSION.

We have now examined the four great doctrines of Christianity, the others either following directly from

these, or not presenting any difficulty. And though, as we have shown, not one of these doctrines can be pronounced *incredible*, yet some of them, especially the Incarnation and the Atonement, seem so very *improbable* as to raise a strong presumption against the truth of the religion. This must be fully and freely admitted. At the same time, it is only fair to remember that this improbability is distinctly lessened by the following considerations.

Firstly, in regard to all these doctrines we have no *adequate* means of deciding what is or is not probable. Reason cannot judge where it has nothing to judge by ; and apart from Christianity itself, we know next to nothing as to what were God's purposes in creating man. If, then, these doctrines are true, their truth depends not upon reason, but upon revelation. All reason can do is to examine most carefully the evidence in favour of the alleged revelation. Of this we should expect it to be able to judge, but the Christian doctrines themselves are plainly above its jurisdiction. We are hence in a region where we cannot trust to our own sense of the fitness of things. And therefore the Christian doctrines cannot be condemned merely because we think them contrary to our reason. And it is undeniable that many thoughtful men (including Agnostics) do not consider them so. For instance, the late Professor Huxley wrote in 1877, ' I have not the slightest objection to offer *a priori* to all the propositions of the Three Creeds. The mysteries of the Church are child's play compared with the mysteries of Nature. The doctrine of the Trinity is not more

puzzling than the necessary antinomies' (that is contradictions) 'of physical speculation.'<sup>1</sup>

And this leads us on to the next point, which is that many *other* facts which are actually true appear equally improbable on *primâ facie* grounds; such, for instance, as the luminiferous æther and the phenomena of growth in the physical world, or the existence of evil and the freedom of man in the moral world. Apart from experience, what an overwhelming argument could be made out against such facts as these; and yet they concern subjects which are to a great extent within our comprehension, whereas Christianity has to do with the nature and character of a Being Who is avowedly beyond our comprehension. May not the difficulties in both cases, but especially in regard to the latter, be due to our *ignorance* only? Very possibly, to understand all the difficulties of Christianity, we should have to understand all the plans and intentions of the Infinite God, which is perhaps in the nature of things impossible for us finite men.

Thirdly, it should be noticed that this *partial* ignorance in regard to Christianity is precisely similar to our partial ignorance in regard to Natural Theology, discussed in Chapter III. We there showed that, though we had not a perfect knowledge of God, we had a sufficient knowledge for all practical purposes. And the same applies to Christianity. The subject does not claim to have been revealed in all its bearings,

<sup>1</sup> Quoted with his permission in Bishop Gore's *Bampton Lectures*, 1891, p. 247, 1898 edition.

but only in so far as it concerns ourselves. Take, for instance, the doctrine of the Atonement. We are not told how much was God the Father's part, or how much was Christ's part, or the exact relation of these two ; but we are told what must be *our* part, in forsaking sin, etc., if we are to benefit by it. Thus Christianity, like Natural Theology, claims to be a subject which can only be partly and yet sufficiently understood.

Fourthly, it should be noticed that, though individually the Christian doctrines may seem improbable, yet, when considered as a whole, as in all fairness they ought to be, there is a complete harmony between them. Their improbability is not *cumulative*. On the contrary, one often helps to explain the difficulties of another. This has been recognised by most writers, including many who can scarcely be called theologians. For instance, the great Napoleon is reported to have said, ' If once the Divine character of Christ is admitted, Christian doctrine exhibits the precision and clearness of algebra ; so that we are struck with admiration at its scientific connection and unity.'<sup>1</sup>

In conclusion, it must be again pointed out that we are only now considering the *credibility* of Christianity, and not trying to make out that it is a probable religion on *a priori* grounds, which it obviously is not. Only its improbability is not so extremely great as to make it useless to consider the evidence in its favour. This is especially so when we reflect that this improba-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from Bertrand's *Memoirs*, Paris, 1844, in the *Christian's Plea*, by Redford, 2nd edit., p. 197. I have not verified the reference.

bility must have seemed as great, if not greater, when Christianity was first preached than it does now, when we are so accustomed to the religion. And yet, as a matter of fact, the evidence in its favour did outweigh every objection, and finally convince the civilised world. What this evidence is we proceed to inquire.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THAT THE FOUR GOSPELS ARE AUTHENTIC FROM EXTERNAL TESTIMONY.

#### (A.) THE UNDISPUTED TESTIMONY.

End of second century: Irenæus, and the Muratorian Canon. This evidence retrospective, and of great value.

#### (B.) THE ALMOST UNDISPUTED TESTIMONY.

- (1.) Justin Martyr, A.D. 150. He refers to publicly read Apostolic *Memoirs*, which must have been our Synoptic Gospels, as the same events are alluded to, though the quotations are not accurate; and probably included the Fourth Gospel.
- (2.) Tatian, wrote the Diatessaron, or harmony of Four Gospels.
- (3.) Marcian, A.D. 140, wrote a Gospel based on St. Luke's.

#### (C.) THE DISPUTED TESTIMONY.

- (1.) The Gospel of St. Peter.
- (2.) Papias: mentions first two Gospels by name, and probably knew of the others.
- (3.) The Apostolic Fathers: Polycarp, Ignatius, Clement, Barnabas, and the Teaching of the Twelve.

HAVING shown in the last chapter that the Christian Religion is *credible*, we have next to consider what evidence there is in its favour. Now that it was founded on the alleged teaching and miracles of Christ, and chiefly on His Resurrection, is admitted by everyone. So we must first examine whether we



have any trustworthy testimony as to these events ; more especially whether the Four Gospels, which appear to contain such testimony, are authentic. By the *Four Gospels*, it need scarcely be remarked, we mean those commonly ascribed to SS. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John ; and by their being *authentic* we mean that they were in the main, and excluding doubtful passages, written or compiled by those persons. Whether the events they record are true is of course another question, which will be examined later on : at present we are dealing with their authenticity only.

It may be mentioned at starting that we have no complete manuscripts of the Gospels earlier than the beginning of the fourth century ; but there is nothing surprising in this, as for the first two centuries books were written on *papyrus*, an extremely fragile material. And therefore, with the exception of some fragments preserved in Egypt, all documents of this period, whether Christian or classical, have entirely perished. A much more durable material, *vellum*, began to supplant papyrus in the third century, but did not come into common use till the fourth. Moreover, during the persecutions, which occurred at intervals up to the fourth century, all Christian *writings* were specially sought for, and destroyed ; so the absence of earlier manuscripts, though very unfortunate, is not unnatural. We have now to consider the *external testimony* to the Gospels from early Christian writers, reserving the *internal evidence* from the Gospels themselves for the next chapter.

## (A.) THE UNDISPUTED TESTIMONY.

Fortunately we need not begin later than the end of the second century, since it is admitted by everyone that our four Gospels were then well known throughout the Church. They were continually quoted by Christian writers; they were universally ascribed to the authors we now ascribe them to; and they were always considered to be in some sense divinely inspired.

As this is undisputed, we need not discuss the evidence in detail; but one writer deserves to be mentioned, because his testimony is retrospective, and proves far more than the mere fact that the Gospels were well known in his time. This is *Irenæus* of Lyons, whose works date from about A.D. 185. He not only quotes the Gospels frequently, and assigns them to the same Evangelists as we do now, but he shows that there were only *four* of acknowledged authority, since the fanciful analogies he gives for this, likening the four Gospels to the four rivers in Paradise, and the four quarters of the globe, render it certain that the fact of there being four, neither more nor less, must have been undisputed in his day.

And what renders his testimony of special value is that he had such an excellent means of knowing the truth. He was born in Asia Minor (probably about A.D. 130) and brought up under Polycarp; and he himself tells us in after life how well he remembered his teacher. 'I can even describe the place where the blessed Polycarp used to sit and discourse—his going out, too, and his coming in—his general mode of life and personal appearance, together with the discourses

which he delivered to the people ; also how he would speak of his familiar intercourse with John, and with the rest of those who had seen the Lord ; and how he would call their words to remembrance. Whatsoever things he had heard from them respecting the Lord, both with regard to His miracles and His teaching, Polycarp having thus received (information) from the eye-witnesses of the Word of Life, would recount them all in harmony with the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of this can scarcely be exaggerated. Take, for instance, the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. Is it conceivable that Irenæus would have ascribed it to St. John unless it had been mentioned to him as such by Polycarp ? Or is it conceivable that Polycarp, who personally knew St. John, could have been deceived by a forgery ? The difficulties of either alternative, when carefully considered, will be seen to be enormous ; and yet there is no other, unless we admit that St. John was the author.

It should also be noticed that Irenæus, when discussing two alternative readings of Rev. 13. 18, supports one of them by saying that it is found *in all the good and ancient copies* ; and was also maintained by men *who had seen John face to face* !<sup>2</sup> He had thus some idea as to the value of evidence : and it is most unlikely that he should have written as he did about the Four Gospels, unless he had seen equally good and ancient copies of them.

<sup>1</sup> Irenæus, Fragment of Epistle to Florinus. The translations here and elsewhere are from the Ante-Nicene Christian Library.

<sup>2</sup> Iren. 5. 30.

Before passing on, we must glance at the *Muratorian Canon*. This is the earliest known list of New Testament books, and appears to have been written about A.D. 175. The first part is lost; the portion that remains commences with 'The third Book of the Gospel, that of Luke.' It then mentions 'The Fourth Gospel, that of John,' then the Acts of the Apostles by Luke, and then the remaining books of our present New Testament, except the Epistle to the Hebrews, giving a few notes about each. It also mentions various apocryphal works, but distinguishes between these and the canonical ones, saying that the latter were inspired. From all this it is clear that at the close of the second century, our four Gospels held much the same position among Christians as they do at present. And this alone raises a strong presumption in favour of their authenticity.

(B.) THE ALMOST UNDISPUTED TESTIMONY.

(1.) *Justin Martyr*.

By far the most important of the earlier witnesses is *Justin Martyr*; and this importance is due to the fact that three of his writings, two Apologies and a Dialogue, have come down to us, which are admittedly genuine, and long enough to argue from with some confidence. And that he refers to our Gospels is *almost undisputed*. His works date from about A.D. 150, the first Apology being addressed to the Emperor Antoninus (138-161). He was, moreover, a philosopher, and says himself that prior to embracing Christianity he had studied various philosophical systems and found them unsatisfactory; so we may

be sure that he did not accept Christianity without making similar inquiries into the facts on which it rested.<sup>1</sup>

Now Justin does not allude to any of the Evangelists by name, but he frequently quotes from the '*Memoirs of the Apostles*,' which he says were sometimes called *Gospels*,<sup>2</sup> and were publicly read and expounded in the churches, together with the Old Testament Prophets. And he gives no hint that this was a local or recent practice, but implies that it was the universal and well-established custom. These Memoirs, he tells us,<sup>3</sup> were written by the *Apostles and their followers*, which exactly describes our present Gospels, two of which are ascribed to Apostles (Matthew and John), and the other two to their immediate followers (Mark and Luke). And considering that Justin was writing for unbelievers, not Christians, there is nothing strange in his not mentioning the names of the individual writers. In the same way Tertullian never once names the Evangelists in his Apology, which is addressed to heathens, though he often does so in his writings addressed to Christians.

Now Justin gives about sixty quotations from these Memoirs, and they describe precisely those events in the life of Christ recorded in our first three, commonly called the *Synoptic*, Gospels, and with scarcely any addition. Indeed, out of all Justin's references to the events of Christ's life, whether quotations or not, of which there are over two hundred, only four refer to events not now found in our Gospels. This is very remarkable, and seems to show that even at this early

<sup>1</sup> Dial., 2.

<sup>2</sup> Apol. 1. 66.

<sup>3</sup> Dial., 103.

time our Gospels were the only recognised sources of information.

For example, we may take the events of Christ's birth and childhood. As is well known, the apocryphal Gospels were very diffuse on this subject ; but the events mentioned by Justin have been carefully collected, and are found to consist merely of these : that Christ was descended from Abraham through Jacob, Judah, Phares, Jesse, and David ;<sup>1</sup> that the Angel Gabriel announced His birth to the Virgin Mary ; that this was a fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah ; that Joseph was forbidden in a vision to put away his espoused wife ; that Christ's birth at Bethlehem had been foretold by Micah ; that His parents went thither from Nazareth, where they dwelt, in consequence of the enrolment of Quirinius ; that as they could not find a lodging in the village they lodged in a *cave* close by, where Christ was born, and laid in a manger ; that while there wise men from *Arabia*, guided by a star, worshipped Him and offered Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and by revelation were commanded not to return to Herod, to whom they had first come ; that He was called Jesus, as the Saviour of His people ; that by the command of God His parents fled with Him to Egypt for fear of Herod, and remained there till Archelaus succeeded him ; and that Herod, being deceived by the wise men, slew the infants at Bethlehem, so that the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled, as to Rachel weeping for her children.

<sup>1</sup> Justin names these persons as the ancestors of the Virgin Mary, but she, as well as Joseph, may have been descended from David.

With the exception of the two words in italics, there is no addition to our present Gospels here ; and any ordinary reader would at once conclude that Justin was quoting from them. There is, however, this difficulty. Scarcely any of the quotations are verbally accurate, and it has been urged in consequence that Justin must have been quoting from some *Lost Gospel*. But this theory is hardly tenable. For Justin sometimes quotes the same passage differently, clearly showing that he was relying on his memory ; and that he had not looked up the reference, which in those days of manuscripts, without concordances, must have been a tedious process. Also when quoting the Old Testament, he is almost equally inaccurate ; though none will deny that he both knew it, and intended to quote it. While later Christian writers, such as Irenæus, who avowedly quoted from our Gospels, are also inaccurate in small details.

We need not therefore assume a *Lost Gospel* to account for Justin's quotations ; though, if we do, it does not materially affect the argument, since of necessity this *Lost Gospel* must have contained a precisely similar account of Christ's life to that in our Synoptic ones. And this is the important point—not when or by whom were the Gospels written, but whether the facts they record are *true*. And this must depend on whether the immediate followers of Christ, who had ample means of knowing, believed them to be true. And an earlier *Lost Gospel*, if it recorded *the same facts*, would be as valuable evidence of this as our present ones. But there is

practically no doubt that Justin was quoting from these Gospels.

But with regard to the *Fourth Gospel*, the case is different, since there are far fewer apparent references in Justin. He seems, however, to have known it, since its phraseology, and to some extent its doctrines, are distinct from the other three, and yet they are reproduced by Justin. To begin with, his *phraseology* is so similar in some cases as to amount to a quotation. The following are two of the strongest instances :<sup>1</sup> ' Christ also said, Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now, that it is impossible for those who have once been born to enter into their mother's womb is manifest to all.' ' He (John the Baptist) cried to them, I am not the Christ, but the voice of one crying ; for He that is stronger than I shall come, Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear.'

Again, the *doctrines* taught by Justin regarding the pre-existence and divinity of Christ, the sacrament of baptism, and some others, are precisely such as are found in the Fourth Gospel and nowhere else. For example,<sup>2</sup> ' The first power after God the Father and Lord of all is the Word, Who is also the Son ; and of Him we will, in what follows, relate how He took flesh and became man.' And again, ' The Word of wisdom, Who is Himself this God begotten of the Father of all things.' It has been suggested that Justin derived these doctrines from the Greek Jew Philo, born about

<sup>1</sup> Apol. 1. 61 ; Dial., 88 ; John 3. 3-5 ; 1. 20-27.

<sup>2</sup> Apol. 1. 32 ; Dial., 61.



B.C. 20, in whose writings the Divine Word or *Logos* is often alluded to. But the great doctrine of the Fourth Gospel, that of the Incarnation of the Word, which is reproduced by Justin, is never hinted at by Philo. Moreover, considering that in his Dialogue Justin was arguing with a Jew, he would probably have mentioned Philo if quoting from him.

(2.) *Tatian*:

To the above evidence must be added that of Justin's disciple, *Tatian*. He wrote a book about A.D. 175, recently discovered, called the *Diatessaron*, which, as its name implies, was a kind of harmony of *Four* Gospels. It was based chiefly on St. Matthew's, the events peculiar to the others being introduced in various places. And it may be noticed in passing that men do not write commentaries on books, or try to harmonise them, unless they are fairly ancient works and of established importance. Its special value in our present inquiry is that it commences with the sentence, *In the beginning was the Word*, etc., which is the opening clause of the Fourth Gospel. And this shows that that Gospel must have been in circulation in Justin's time, and renders it almost certain that he derived these quotations and doctrines from it, and not from some purely imaginary source.

We can now sum up the evidence of Justin. He shows that in the middle of the second century—and his memory was probably good for thirty years earlier—certain Apostolic *Memoirs* or *Gospels* were publicly read in the churches, and were evidently considered of great authority. And everything points to these being

the same Gospels which were known and quoted throughout the Church towards the close of that century. Indeed, it is hardly conceivable that in such a short time a new set of Gospels could have been introduced, and the older ones immediately forgotten, so that Irenæus, for instance, could have written as he did about there being only four.

(3.) *Marcion.*

Another most important witness is Marcion. He wrote, about A.D. 140, a kind of Gospel, so similar to St. Luke's, that one was evidently based on the other. And that St. Luke's is the earlier is now admitted by critics of all schools, including the author of 'Supernatural Religion' in the third and subsequent editions of his book ; though he had before tried to prove the opposite. And therefore as St. Matthew and St. Mark are generally allowed to be earlier than St. Luke, this shows that *all* our Synoptic Gospels were in circulation before A.D. 140 ; which makes it still more certain that Justin, who wrote ten years later, got his quotations from these Gospels. And if so, their want of verbal accuracy, so far from being an adverse argument, is just the opposite, for it shows that similar discrepancies in other writers in no way disprove that they were quoting from our Gospels.

(C.) THE DISPUTED TESTIMONY.

We pass on now to the testimony of still earlier writers, all of which is more or less disputed by some critics.

(1.) *The Apocryphal Gospel of St. Peter.*

And first as to the Gospel of St. Peter. The existence

of this work (like that of Tatian) has long been known through references to it in early writers, but only recently (1887) has a portion of the work itself been discovered. This is about as long as a single chapter in our Gospels, and contains a brief narrative of events from the washing of Pilate's hands to the return of the disciples to Galilee after the Resurrection. The work was evidently known to Justin, so it cannot be later than A.D. 140. It seems to be rather a careless compilation from our four Gospels, as it mentions very few facts that are not recorded there, though it often distorts them, and puts them in a different order.

Its special value lies in its witness to the Fourth Gospel, since it mentions several points which are peculiar to that Gospel; such as the legs of the malefactors being broken, though not apparently those of Christ Himself, the place where He was buried being called a *garden*, and the Crucifixion taking place before 'the first day of Unleavened Bread,' in which respect it differs from the Synoptics. And hence it follows that the Fourth Gospel, like the other three, must have been well known, and of recognised authority at that time.

(2.) *Papias*.

Next as to Papias. He was bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor early in the second century, and only a few fragments of his writings have been preserved by Irenæus and Eusebius. We learn from the former that he was a disciple of St. John and a companion of Polycarp; and considering that Irenæus was himself Polycarp's pupil, there is no reason to doubt this.<sup>1</sup> But

<sup>1</sup> Irenæus, Bk. 5, 33.

these fragments have been the cause of great controversy. Papias tells us himself what were his sources of information: 'If, then, anyone who had attended on the elders came, I asked minutely after their sayings,—what Andrew or Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the Lord's disciples: which things Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say. For I imagined that what was to be got from books was not so profitable to me as what came from the living and abiding voice.'

He had thus the best possible means of knowing, and his testimony to the first two Gospels is explicit. He says, 'Matthew put together the oracles in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as best he could.' And 'Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not, however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied Him. But afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter.'<sup>1</sup>

But Eusebius gives no quotations from Papias concerning the last two Gospels; and from this we may perhaps infer that he knew nothing as to the composition of these Gospels, similar to what he did about the first two. But to conclude, as some critics do, that Papias had never heard of the books in question, is quite unjustified. It is based on a misunderstanding of a passage in Eusebius.<sup>2</sup> He does not here say that he will mention *every* reference in earlier writers to the

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, Hist., iii. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Eusebius, Hist., iii. 3.

New Testament scriptures, but only their allusion to the *disputed* books of his time (A.D. 315), and what they said about the canonical ones. And judging by those writers whose works are still extant, this is exactly what he has done. For instance, he quotes what Irenæus says about the Gospels and the Revelation, and also that he quoted 1 John, 1 Peter, and the Shepherd of Hermas, which latter he accepted as canonical ; but not a word is said about his having used the Acts and St. Paul's Epistles. Yet as a matter of fact he does so frequently. Plainly Eusebius did not mention this because he took it for granted that every Christian acknowledged these writings. And therefore it is quite possible for Papias to have used, or even quoted, the third and fourth Gospels, without Eusebius mentioning it.

Whether he actually did so cannot of course be decided, unless his works should be rediscovered ; but there are slight indications that he knew them. For instance, the order in which he enumerates the Apostles—Andrew, Peter, and Philip—is not that of their importance, nor are they ever mentioned in that order in the Synoptics, but it is the order in which their calling is described in the fourth Gospel.

(3.) *The Apostolic Fathers.*

The last group of writers to be examined lived in the age immediately succeeding the Apostles. The chief of these are *Polycarp* of Smyrna, the disciple of St. John, martyred in A.D. 155 (not 167, as formerly given), when he had been a Christian 86 years ; *Ignatius* of Antioch, martyred about 110 ; *Clement* of Rome, probably the

companion of St. Paul,<sup>1</sup> and the writers of the so-called *Epistle of Barnabas* and *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. Their dates are not known for certain, but they probably wrote between A.D. 90 and 120.

Now none of these writers mention the Gospels by name ; but this is no argument to show that they were not quoting them, because the same writers, when admittedly quoting St. Paul's Epistles, also do so at times without reference or acknowledgment. And later Christian writers do precisely the same ; the Gospels are often not quoted by name, but their language and phraseology are continually employed, in much the same way as it is by clergymen when preaching at the present day. If, then, we find in these writers passages similar to those in our Gospels, the inference is that they were quoting from them ; and, as a matter of fact, we do find such passages, though they are not numerous. A single example may be given from each.

' But being mindful of what the Lord said in His teaching : Judge not, that ye be not judged ; forgive, and it shall be forgiven unto you ; be merciful, that ye may obtain mercy ; with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again ; and once more, Blessed are the poor, and those that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God.'<sup>2</sup>

' For I know that after His Resurrection also, He was still possessed of flesh, and I believe that He is so

<sup>1</sup> Phil. 4. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Polycarp, ch. ii. ; Luke 6. 36-38 ; Matt. 5. 3, 10.

now. When, for instance, He came to those who were with Peter, He said to them, "Lay hold, handle Me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit."<sup>1</sup>

'Remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, how He said, Woe to that man! It were better for him that he had never been born, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my elect. Yea, it were better for him that a millstone should be hung about (his neck), and he should be sunk in the depths of the sea, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my little ones.'<sup>2</sup>

'Let us beware lest we be found, as it is written, Many are called, but few are chosen.'<sup>3</sup>

'Having said beforehand all these things, baptize ye in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost in living water.'<sup>4</sup>

The passage from Barnabas deserves special mention, since here we have words which only occur in our Gospels, introduced with the phrase *as it is written*, which is only used of Scripture quotations. This shows conclusively that at the time of the writer some Gospel containing these words must have been well known, and considered of high authority. And the attempts to explain away this quotation as from the second Book of Esdras,<sup>5</sup> where the words are, 'There be many created, but few shall be saved;' or as an error on the part of the writer, who fancied they

<sup>1</sup> Ignatius to Smyrnæans, ch. iii. ; Luke 24. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Clement, ch. xlvi. ; Luke 17. 1, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Barnabas, ch. iv. ; Matt. 22. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Teaching, ch. vii. ; Matt. 28. 19.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Esdr. 8. 3.

came somewhere in the Old Testament, are quite inadmissible.

But it may be said, may not all these quotations be from some *Lost Gospel*? Of course they may. It is always possible to refer quotations not to the only book in which we know they do occur, but to some imaginary book in which they might occur. There is, however, no need to do so in this case, as all the evidence points the other way. Though, as said before, even if we do it does not materially affect the argument; for though it weakens the evidence for our Gospels, it rather increases that for the facts which they record. Suppose, for instance, the passage in Ignatius was not taken from St. Luke, but from some *Lost Gospel*. It could not then be cited to show that St. Luke's Gospel was known to Ignatius, but it would afford additional evidence that Christ really did rise from the dead, that when He appeared to His Apostles, they at first thought it was a spirit; and that He took the obvious means of convincing them, by asking them to handle His Body. All this would then be vouched for not only by St. Luke's Gospel, but also by some *other* early Christian writing, which as Ignatius quotes it in A.D. 110 must certainly have been written within the first century. And the same applies in other cases.

And if it be further urged that these writers would have referred more frequently to the Gospels, if they really knew them, we must remember that their writings are generally short, and that while a single quotation proves the prior existence of the document



quoted, ten pages without a quotation do not disprove it.

Lastly, it must be noticed that when these writers refer to the sayings of Christ or the events of His life, they always do so without the slightest hesitation, as if it were acknowledged truth. And these events include all the more important facts about Christ, such as His Pre-existence and Divinity, His Incarnation and Virgin-Birth, His Epiphany and Baptism, His Crucifixion and Resurrection, His Ascension and Future Coming in Judgment. Moreover, as we have seen, their allusions are often introduced with the words *remember* or *be mindful*, clearly showing that they expected their readers to know them already. Hence some books must have then existed which were well known, containing a life of Christ ; and the improbability of these having perished, and a fresh set of Gospels having been published in a few years, is very great. While the later the date we assign to our Gospels, the less likely is it for them to have been at once accepted by the whole Church. And this is confirmed by the fact that none of the apocryphal Gospels, which were later inventions, could ever obtain universal acceptance.

We may now sum up the *external testimony* to the Four Gospels. It shows that at the beginning of the second century they were well known to Christian writers, and this alone would necessitate their composition in the first century ; and thanks to recent discoveries, this is now admitted by many leading rationalists. But if we admit this, the uniform

tradition of the Church and the entire absence of any counter-testimony, make it probable that they were actually written by the Evangelists to whom they have been universally ascribed. We have thus very strong external testimony in favour of the authenticity of the Four Gospels.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THAT THE GOSPELS ARE AUTHENTIC FROM INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

#### (A.) THE THREE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS.

- (1.) Their accuracy. This is shown by secular history ; by comparing them with one another ; and by their apparent truthfulness.
- (2.) Their common narratives. The Triple Tradition.
- (3.) Their probable date. Extremely early date of original Gospels, say A.D. 35-45 ; which were soon superseded by our present ones, say A.D. 50-70.

#### (B.) THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

- (1.) Its authenticity. The writer appears to have been a Jew, living in the first century, and an eye-witness of what he describes ; hence probably St. John.
- (2.) Its connection with the Synoptics. It was meant to supplement them ; while the alleged difference in Christ's character, and the so-called discrepancies, favour its authenticity.
- (3.) Its connection with the Book of Revelation. The latter now admitted to be by St. John, and there are no valid reasons for the Gospel being by a different author.

#### (A.) THE THREE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS.

HAVING decided in the last chapter that the Four Gospels are probably authentic from *external testimony*, we pass on now to the *internal evidence*, which,

it will be seen, strongly supports this conclusion. For convenience we will examine the Synoptic Gospels separately from the Fourth, which is of a different character ; and we will consider first their accuracy, then the portions they have in common, and lastly their probable date.

(1.) *Their accuracy.*

It is now admitted by everyone that the writers show a thorough acquaintance with Palestine both as to its geography, history, and people, especially the political and social state of the country in the half-century preceding the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). The Jewish historian Josephus, who wrote about A.D. 95, gives us a vivid description of this ; and everything we read in the Gospels is in entire agreement with it. And this is the more important because the country was then in a very anomalous condition. It was not like an ordinary Roman province, but had been allowed to retain a certain amount of independence. And yet this *double* system of government, half Roman, half Jewish, which only existed up to the fall of Jerusalem, is implied all through the Gospels. And this alone shows that they must have been written by men familiar with Palestine, and well acquainted with the time in question.

With regard to the actual events described, we have, as a rule, no other account, but where we have, their accuracy is fully confirmed. And this includes many points which none but contemporaries were likely to have known. Among such may be mentioned the importance assigned by the Pharisees to their *tradi-*

tions; the mention of the *didrachma*, or tribute-money voluntarily paid for the support of the Temple, which St. Matthew does not think to need explanation though Josephus does; the names and titles of the various *rulers* of Palestine in the fifteenth year of Tiberius; the strange fact that the term high priest was applied to *two persons* at the same time, which was incorrect according to Jewish law; the publicans or tax-collectors for the Romans being often *Jews*; the *ill-feeling* of the Samaritans towards the Jews; and the position *Pilate* occupied as a Roman governor to the Jewish courts.<sup>1</sup>

In all these cases the accuracy of the narrative is directly confirmed by Josephus or other sources, though it is obvious that many of them are not likely to have been known to a late writer; especially after the destruction of Jerusalem, which completely changed everything in Palestine. Of course combined with all this accuracy, there are a few instances of alleged *inaccuracy*. Three are commonly urged. The first two are mere slips, probably due to a copyist, in calling Zachariah the son of Barachiah; and in referring a prophecy to Jeremiah instead of Zechariah.<sup>2</sup> The other is the enrolment under *Quirinius*. According to St. Luke<sup>3</sup> this occurred while Herod was king, and therefore not later than what we now call B.C. 4,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 15. 3; 17. 24; Luke 3. 1, 2; 5. 27; 9. 53; 23. 7; *comp.* Josephus, *Antiq.* xiii. 10; xvii. 8; xviii. 9; xx. 6, 9; Wars, ii. 12, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 23. 35; 27. 9; 2 Chron. 24. 20; Zech. 1. 1; 11. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 2. 2. See Ramsay, Was Christ born at Bethlehem? 1899.

when Herod died ; whereas, according to Josephus and other authorities, Quirinius was not Governor of Syria till some years after Herod's death, and carried out his taxing in A.D. 6.

This used to be thought one of the most glaring blunders in the Bible, but modern discoveries have shown that it is probably true. To begin with, an inscription was found at Venice, which shows that Quirinius was *twice* Governor of Syria, the former time being probably during the reign of Herod, so there is an end of that difficulty. Next it will be noticed that St. Luke expressly says that this was the *first* enrolment, implying that he knew of others ; and recent discoveries in Egypt (1896-98) have confirmed this in a remarkable manner. For we now know, what was before quite unsuspected, that it was the custom of the Romans to have a *periodical* enrolment of that country (and therefore presumably of other countries) every fourteen years. The actual census papers have been found for A.D. 20, 62, 76, 90, etc., and it is extremely probable, though it cannot be proved for certain, that the system started in B.C. 9-8. It is also probable that the first enrolment may have been delayed a few years in Palestine, which was semi-independent, and that to make it as little unpopular as possible, Herod had it carried out in the Jewish manner, genealogically, each family going to its own city as described by St. Luke. The next census in A.D. 6 was not carried out in this way, and it led to a rebellion, and therefore it alone was thought worthy of notice by Josephus. St. Luke,

it may be added, seems to have known of this second census ;<sup>1</sup> but he also knew, what his critics did not, that it was only one of a series, and that the *first* of the series took place at an earlier date.

We pass on now to the support which the Synoptic Gospels afford each other. They frequently record the same incidents, and yet with such different details as to make it extremely probable that they derived their information from a separate source. And they thus confirm one another as to nearly all the important events of Christ's life.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that there are some *discrepancies* between them ; but these are as a rule so trivial that they do not affect the substantial accuracy of the narratives. For example,<sup>2</sup> St. Matthew relates that at Christ's Baptism the Voice from Heaven said, '*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ;*' and the other Evangelists, '*Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.*' Now the Voice may have spoken in the third or in the second person, but not in both. There is a clear verbal discrepancy, whatever words were used or in whatever language they were spoken. Again, St. Matthew records the passage about the Queen of the South as being spoken just after, and St. Luke as just before, the similar passage about the men of Nineveh, though both can hardly be correct. While, however, the discrepancies are plain, their unimportance is at least equally so.

<sup>1</sup> Acts 5. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 3. 17 ; 12. 42 ; Mark 1. 11 ; Luke 3. 22 ; 11. 31.

Lastly, it must be noticed that even where we have no means of testing the Gospels, they have every appearance of being *thoroughly truthful*. The writers record several events which were not at all creditable to the Apostles, such as their cowardice when Christ was apprehended ; and they record many minute incidents which could hardly have been worth inventing. Moreover, when they relate Christ's acts, they do so as a rule without remark, and do not dilate upon their excellence in the way St. Paul does, or stop to censure His foes. And the same calmness is shown even when recording the details of His Passion and the triumph of His Resurrection. They express no indignation at the one, and no exultation at the other, but strictly limit themselves to the actual facts. While one of them, St. Luke, tells us in his preface that he had ample means of knowing the truth from the very beginning, and that this was the reason why he determined to write.

And St. Luke seems to have had access to some extremely early documents. Take for instance the very Judaic and pre-Christian tone of chap. 1. 68-74. It reads like a passage from the Old Testament, with its allusions to the God of Israel, the house of His servant David, His holy covenant, the oath which He swore unto Abraham our father, and above all the hopes of a Messiah, Who should *deliver us from the hands of our enemies—i.e., the Romans*.

Of course Christians give a spiritual meaning to the passage, but this was obviously not its original sense. It is all perfectly consistent in the mouth



of Zacharias shortly before the time of Christ, but could scarcely have been invented by anyone after the Crucifixion. And exactly the same may be said as to other parts of this chapter, such as *The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever*. No doubt St. Luke incorporated it all from some earlier document; but if so it strongly supports his own statement that he had accurate information from the very first.

Moreover, and this is very important, the facts recorded in the Gospels are often of such a kind as to bear unmistakable signs of truthfulness. For example, the Evangelists record several of Christ's *hard sayings*, as they are called, which must have presented great difficulties. In particular may be mentioned His statement that some of the bystanders were not to die till apparently the end of the world, that a Christian's faith could move mountains, and that all believers would be able to work miracles; as well as His own (seeming) cry of despair from the Cross that God had forsaken Him.<sup>1</sup> That such statements should have been invented in later years is out of the question. So far from helping Christianity, they would have proved a hindrance to it; and therefore we can only conclude that they were actually spoken by Christ, and that the writers, knowing this, did not venture to omit them or soften them down, no matter what difficulties they presented.

Again, nearly all the *parables* of Christ have very

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 16. 28; 17. 20; 27. 46; Mark 9. 1; 11. 23; 16. 17.

strong marks of genuineness, as they are thoroughly natural in character, and suit the customs and scenery in Palestine. Moreover, they are unique in Christian literature. However strange we may think it, the early Christians seem never to have adopted Christ's method of teaching by parables. And yet, if they had invented these parables, instead of merely recording them, they would doubtless have invented others like them. It is hence probable that these discourses are genuine ; and, if so, they must have been written down within a very few years, since the accurate preservation of such long discourses by memory would have been most difficult.

On the whole then these Gospels, wherever we have any means of testing them, either by secular history, or by comparing them with one another, or by their general character, and the facts they record, appear to be substantially accurate.

(2.) *Their common narratives.*

We now come to a more difficult subject, for the three Gospels are found on examination to have a number of identical passages. And as these are far too numerous to be ascribed to oral tradition, they must be due to *copying* in some form, either two Evangelists copying the third, or all three some earlier document. The portion which they have in common is often called the *Triple Tradition* ; but this is a singularly unfortunate name, as it seems to imply that this portion of the narrative is triply attested, whereas it is precisely the opposite. If the three Evangelists record an event in the same words, it is obviously

derived from only one original witness ; whereas, if they record it in different words, it may be due to three independent witnesses.

This triple tradition includes many of the parables of Christ, also several miracles, such as the stilling of the storm, the feeding of the five thousand, the curing of the Gadarene, and the Transfiguration ; but it stops short at the Passion. If, as is probable, it represents the testimony of a single witness, there is little difficulty in identifying him with St. Peter. And as we should expect from the testimony of Papias (quoted in the last chapter), it seems most nearly preserved in our present St. Mark's Gospel, though it is uncertain whether this actually was the so-called Triple Tradition, or whether it was a subsequent edition of it, written by St. Mark, perhaps after St. Peter's death. (This is the date given by Irenæus, while Clement of Alexandria says that St. Mark wrote during St. Peter's lifetime.) As to the closing scenes of Christ's life, there would of course be numerous witnesses, and this accounts for want of verbal agreement here.

But this is not all ; for our first and third Gospels contain a common element, which is not in the second ; so here we may have another older document ; while each of them has also a certain amount of matter peculiar to itself. This has of course given rise to a great many theories as to their mutual dependence. Fortunately we need not discuss them here, but we may safely assume that our present Gospels were not the *earliest* accounts of Christ's life. And admitting

this, we must next inquire when were the earliest Gospels probably written, and when were they superseded by our present ones ?

(3.) *Their probable date.*

Now everything points to the *original* accounts of Christ's life having been written at an extremely early date. This was indeed almost inevitable, for the Christian religion spread with great rapidity, and from the very first the substance of every missionary's preaching was not a mere philosophy or system of morals, but the life and work, the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus St. Luke, when he wrote his Gospel, says it was to assure Theophilus of the things wherein he had already been instructed, clearly showing that the course of instruction must have covered the whole of Christ's life.<sup>1</sup> And therefore from the very first Christian teachers must have had some accounts of Christ's life. And that they left these with the Churches they founded is most probable.

Nor is all this mere conjecture. As is well known, four of *St. Paul's Epistles* (Rom., 1 Cor., 2 Cor., and Gal.) are admitted to be genuine by critics of all schools, such as Baur, Strauss, Rénan, and the author of 'Supernatural Religion'; and these show that he used to base his teaching on certain historic facts connected with Christ's life, and was in the habit of committing these to his converts.<sup>2</sup> And that there was some written account of them is extremely probable, since Christianity arose in a literary age; and these same Epistles show how fully both preachers and

<sup>1</sup> Luke 1. 4.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., 1 Cor. 11. 23-25; 15. 1-8.

converts were able to appreciate documentary teaching. And when we add to this the fact that many of the parables and other sayings of Christ have strong claims to genuineness, and therefore to a very early date, the conclusion seems irresistible that some biographies of Christ must have been composed very soon after His death.

But now comes the important question : When were these earliest Gospels superseded by our present ones ? In the absence of direct evidence we can only judge by probability, which is strongly in favour of our present Gospels having been written very soon after the others.

To begin with, the earliest Gospels have entirely perished, except those portions which have been incorporated into our present three ; and perhaps a single passage in the Acts,<sup>1</sup> since everyone admits that our present *apocryphal* Gospels are later than the canonical ones. The first Gospels then could only have survived a very short time, or they would not have been superseded so rapidly or so completely. And if they were mere fragmentary accounts of the life of Christ, and some years later two of the Apostles, and two other persons well qualified to do so, wrote our present complete Gospels embodying these fragments, all is clear. The earlier ones would at once disappear. But if, on the other hand, these earlier Gospels were written by the contemporaries of Christ, and our present ones were not written till years afterwards, by men who had not such authentic knowledge, why

<sup>1</sup> Acts 20. 35.

they should have superseded the earlier ones is difficult to account for. Indeed, there is a very strong improbability of any apostolic Gospels being superseded, or even altered, in subsequent times.

Moreover, our present Gospels bear strong evidence of having been written before the fall of Jerusalem. For instance, several *subjects* are discussed, such as the lawfulness of the Jews paying tribute to Cæsar, which would have had no interest after that event. And that conversations on such subjects should have been invented in later days, or even thought worth recording, is most improbable. Again in St. Matthew we read that the potter's field, where strangers were buried, was called the field of blood *unto this day*.<sup>1</sup> And this could scarcely have been written after the destruction of Jerusalem, when the whole city was merely a heap of ruins.

Still more important is the prophetic description of the fall of Jerusalem itself, which seems confused by the Evangelists with that of the Day of Judgment, St. Matthew saying, and both the others implying, that the one would immediately follow the other.<sup>2</sup> Had the Gospels been written after the former event, it is almost certain that the writers would have distinguished between the two ; indeed, their not doing so is scarcely conceivable, except on the supposition that when they wrote both events were yet future.

And this is strongly confirmed by the curious hint given to the readers in Matt. 24. 15 (and also in Mark) to *understand*, and act on Christ's advice, and leave

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 27. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 24 ; Mark 13 ; Luke 21.

the city before the siege became too severe, which the Christians actually did. It is out of the question that such a warning should have been added *after* the siege, when it would have been utterly useless. It was evidently written shortly before, say about A.D. 65, when the storm seemed to be gathering ; and therefore if it is an interpolation, as it certainly seems to be, it proves a still earlier date for the rest of the chapter.

On the whole, then, everything points to the earliest Gospels having been written very soon after Christ's death, say A.D. 35-45, and to our present three having superseded them in a few years, say A.D. 50-70, or at all events before the destruction of Jerusalem in the latter year ; and hence they were most likely written by the Evangelists, to whom they have been universally ascribed.

And, it may be added, in regard to the Evangelists themselves, St. Matthew was a tax-collector, and therefore just the sort of person to keep records. St. Mark came of a well-to-do family, as his mother had a large house at Jerusalem, and his relative, Barnabas, also had some property ; and St. Luke was a doctor ; so all three were certainly able to write Gospels if they wanted to.<sup>1</sup> While, on the other hand, none of them seem to have taken a prominent part in the founding of Christianity, so there was no reason for ascribing the Gospels to them, rather than to such great men as St. Peter and St. Paul, unless they actually wrote them.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 9. 9 ; Acts 4. 37 ; 12. 12 ; Col. 4. 10, 14.

(B.) THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

We pass on now to the Fourth Gospel, and will first examine its strong marks of authenticity, and then the two counter-arguments, said to be derived by comparing it with the Synoptic Gospels, and the Book of Revelation.

(I.) *Its authenticity.*

In the first place, the writer appears to have been a Jew. This is shown by his frequently quoting the Old Testament, and twice from the Hebrew instead of the Septuagint, where there is a difference between them.<sup>1</sup> He was also well acquainted with the Jewish feasts, and he alone has recorded Christ's attendance at them; three Passovers and two other festivals being mentioned.<sup>2</sup> Moreover he was well aware of Jewish prejudices, such as the ill-feeling against the Samaritans; and he also shows complete knowledge of Jewish customs, those in regard to purification being frequently alluded to.<sup>3</sup> The only counter-argument is from the frequent use of the term *the Jews*; but this does not necessarily show that the writer was not a Jew himself, but merely that his intended readers were not. A Jew writing for Gentile Christians might certainly use the phrase.

Secondly, the writer appears to have lived in the *first century*. This is probable from his intimate acquaintance with Jerusalem, and that city was only a heap of ruins after A.D. 70. Thus he speaks of Bethesda, the

<sup>1</sup> John 13. 18; 19. 37.

<sup>2</sup> John 2. 13; 6. 4; 7. 37; 10. 22; 13. 1.

<sup>3</sup> John 2. 6; 11. 55; 18. 28; 19. 31.



pool near the sheep-gate, having five porches ; of Solomon's porch ; of the pool of Siloam ; of the brook Kedron ; of the place that is called the Pavement, or Gabbatha ; of the place of a skull, or Golgotha ; and of the Temple with its oxen, sheep, and doves for sacrifice, and its money-changers for changing foreign money into Jewish, in which alone the Temple tax could be paid. And he also knew that it had been founded forty-six years before the time of Christ's ministry.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, the controversies discussed in the Gospel are such as would have had no interest even early in the second century. Then the important disputes were about the Gnostic theories as to the origin of evil, as well as such questions as the time of celebrating Easter, and Church government. But none of these are even alluded to in the Gospel, and yet a writer of that age was sure to have taken one or other side in these controversies, and, if a forger, would not have scrupled to introduce some favourable evidence into his pretended Gospel. On the other hand, the duty of observing the Sabbath is discussed at length, which would have had no interest in the second century. And the Gospel is also full of the hopes of the Jews, of a temporal Messiah, and the expectations they had formed about Him, which, of course, perished with Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, the writer appears to have been an *eye-witness* of what he describes. He twice asserts this himself, as well as in an Epistle which is generally allowed to be by the same writer, where he positively

<sup>1</sup> John 2. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.*, John 7. 27, 31, 42 ; 12. 34.

declares that he had both seen, heard, and touched his Master.<sup>1</sup> So, if not true, the work must be a deliberate forgery; and this is certainly improbable. Moreover, the whole narrative seems to imply that the writer was an eye-witness. For instance, he frequently identifies himself with the Apostles, recording their feelings and reflections in a way which would be very unlikely for any forger to have thought of. Would a forger, for instance, have thought of inventing questions which the Apostles wanted to ask their Master, though they were afraid to do so? Or would he have thought it worth repeating so often that they did not understand at the time the real significance of the events they took part in?<sup>2</sup> Or again, would he have invented such a strange discourse as that about the Bread of Life, and then say at the end that it had the effect of driving away many of Christ's own disciples?<sup>3</sup>

The writer is also very minute as to times and places. Take, for instance, the passage 1. 29—2. 1, with its expressions *On the morrow*, *Again on the morrow*, *About the tenth hour*, *On the morrow*, *And the third day*. It reads like extracts from an old diary, and why should all these insignificant details be recorded? What did it matter half a century later whether it was the same day, or the morrow, or the third day? The only reasonable explanation is that the writer was present himself (being of course the unnamed companion of St. Andrew); that this was the turning-point in his

<sup>1</sup> John 1. 14; 19. 35; 1 John 1. 1.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., John 2. 17, 22; 4. 27; 12. 6; 13. 28; 21. 12.

<sup>3</sup> John 6. 32-66.

life when he first saw his Lord ; and that therefore every detail, however unimportant, was stamped on his memory, and he loved to recall it.

And it should be noticed in passing that this passage explains an apparent difficulty in St. Mark, and the other Synoptics, where it is stated that these Apostles were called to follow Christ, after the death of St. John the Baptist ; but with an abruptness, and sudden obedience on their part, which it is hard to believe.<sup>1</sup> We here learn, however, that they had already been with Christ some months before, in company with the Baptist, so they were doubtless prepared for the call when it came.

And the passage, like many others, also bears internal marks of truthfulness. In particular may be mentioned the avowal of Nathanael, *Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel*, implying that the latter title was at least as honourable as the former. No Christian in later times, when Christ was obviously not the King of Israel (except in a purely spiritual sense), and when the title *Son of God* had come to mean so much more than it ever did to the Jews, would have invented such a phrase as this. Nor would he have put into the mouth of Philip the words ' Jesus of Nazareth, *the Son of Joseph*.' It was of course quite natural for Philip to have said so at the time, but it speaks much for the writer's candour to have recorded it, more especially as the latter words were quite needless, and might easily have been omitted.

Then there is the extremely graphic way in which some of the narratives are described ; such as the

<sup>1</sup> Mark i. 14-20.

repeated questioning of the man that was born blind, or the visit of the disciples to the Tomb.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to believe that the writer was not present himself at the time, being in the latter case the companion of St. Peter. While the reference in the following chapter to the manner of St. Peter's death is so obscure, that it could hardly have been composed as a pretended prediction, after the event. The words were evidently written down by someone who had heard them spoken, and even he thinks it necessary to explain their meaning.

Lastly, if we admit that the writer was an eyewitness, it can hardly be disputed that he was the Apostle *St. John*. Indeed, were he anyone else, it is strange that an apostle of such importance should not be once mentioned throughout the Gospel. It is also significant that the other John, who is described in the Synoptics as John the *Baptist*, to distinguish him from the Apostle, is called in this Gospel merely *John*. No confusion could arise if, and only if, the writer himself were the Apostle John. While still more important is the fact that at the close of the last chapter, which seems to be a sort of appendix to the Gospel, we have the solemn declaration of St. John's disciples, who knew him personally, that he was its author ; and testimony more ancient or more conclusive can scarcely be imagined.

With regard to the *date* of the book, we can say little for certain, but the extreme care which is taken in these closing verses to explain exactly what Christ did, and

<sup>1</sup> John 9. 8-34 ; 20. 1-10 ; 21. 18.

did not say as to St. John's dying before His coming again, seems to imply that the matter was still undecided, in other words that St. John was still alive, when they were written. And if so the Gospel must have been published toward the close of the first century.

(2.) *Its connection with the Synoptic Gospels.*

But, as before said, there are two arguments against the authenticity of this Gospel. The first is that the Christ of the Fourth Gospel is almost a different person from the Christ of the Synoptics. His miracles with one exception are all different, and so are His discourses both in substance and in style. His character is also different, since, instead of inculcating moral virtues, as in the Sermon on the Mount, He keeps asserting His own Divine character. While, lastly, where the Gospels cover the same ground there are discrepancies between them. From all this it is urged the Fourth Gospel is evidently unhistorical, and written long after the time of Christ, when the Church held high views concerning His Divinity. This objection is really threefold, and each part of it admits of a complete and satisfactory answer.

To begin with, the fact that the Fourth Gospel narrates *different* events and discourses in the life of Christ from what we find in the other three, and this to an extent which can scarcely be accidental, must of course be admitted. But what then? Why should not one biography of Christ purposely narrate certain events in His life, which the writer thought important, but which had been omitted in previous accounts?

This is what occurs frequently at the present day, and why should it not have occurred then ? The Fourth Gospel may have been written on purpose to *supplement* some other accounts.

Nor is this mere conjecture, for there is strong evidence from the Gospel itself that it was actually written with some such purpose. Thus the writer refers to many events without describing them, and in such a way as to show that he supposed his readers knew about them. He assumes, for instance, that they know about St. John the Baptist being imprisoned, about Joseph being the reputed father of Christ, about the appointment of the Twelve, and about Mary having anointed the Lord.<sup>1</sup> And when we add to this the fact that many important events in the life of Christ are omitted altogether, such as His Birth, His Baptism, His instituting the Eucharist, and His Ascension, it makes it almost certain that the Gospel was written for well-instructed Christians, who possessed some other biographies of Christ. And everything points to these being our present Synoptic Gospels.

And then as to the style of language ascribed to Christ in the Fourth Gospel being different from that in the Synoptics. This is no doubt partly true, but we have in these other Gospels at least one specimen of similar style.<sup>2</sup> And this shows that Christ did occasionally speak in this manner ; and there is no reason why St. John should not have purposely preserved such discourses because the other Evangelists had neglected to do so.

<sup>1</sup> John 3. 24 ; 6. 42, 70 ; 11. 2.      <sup>2</sup> Matt. 11. 25 ; Luke 10. 21.

The next part of the objection is that the *Character* assigned to Christ in the Fourth Gospel is different from that in the other three. And this also is partly true, for the Fourth Gospel asserts the Divinity of Christ more directly than the others which only imply it (see Chapter XX.). And very probably the writer did so intentionally, thinking that this aspect of Christ's character had not been sufficiently emphasised in the previous biographies. Indeed, he implies it himself, for he says that he omitted much that he might have inserted, and merely recorded what he did in order to convince his readers that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.<sup>1</sup> But no argument for a late date can be drawn from this, for the admittedly genuine Epistles of St. Paul, which are probably as early as the Synoptic Gospels (perhaps earlier) describe exactly the same Christ as is portrayed in the Fourth Gospel, speaking of His Divinity, Pre-existence, and Incarnation (see Chapter XX.). And from the way in which St. Paul alludes to these doctrines he evidently considered them the common belief of all Christians when he wrote, about A.D. 54. And therefore the fact of the Fourth Gospel laying stress on these doctrines is no reason whatever against either its authenticity or its early date ; more especially as they are also found in the Revelation, which even hostile critics allow to have been written by St. John himself.

Lastly, as to the *discrepancies*. Many of these can be explained satisfactorily ; possibly all could if we had fuller knowledge. But even if discrepancies exist, the

<sup>1</sup> John 20. 31.

inference against the genuineness of the Fourth Gospel does not follow. For the writer, whoever he was, must certainly have lived after the Synoptics were in circulation, and, as we have seen, probably wrote to supplement them. Now, if he were an obscure Christian, or lived many years after the events of which he pretended he was an eye-witness, he would have been careful not to contradict the received accounts. But if he were the Apostle John, writing from memory after the lapse of many years, he might well narrate things somewhat differently from the others, and, considering his own authority, would not have thought it necessary to make his account harmonise with theirs. Slight discrepancies, then, with the other three Gospels are no argument against the Fourth.

On the other hand, there are several *undesigned coincidences* between them which are a strong argument in favour of the accuracy of both. A couple of examples must suffice here. The first refers to the accusation brought against Christ of destroying and rebuilding the Temple in three days. This is alluded to by both St. Matthew and St. Mark ; but St. John alone records the words on which it was founded, though he does not himself mention the charge, and quotes the words in quite a different connection.<sup>1</sup>

The other example refers to feeding the five thousand, which is the only miracle the Gospels have in common.<sup>2</sup> St. Mark says this was performed in a desert place,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 26. 61 ; Mark 14. 58 ; John 2. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 6. 31 ; John 6. 4.



where Christ had gone to rest for a while, and to avoid the crowd of persons who were coming and going at Capernaum. But he gives no hint as to why there was this crowd just at that time. St. John says nothing about this temporary seclusion, nor of the great crowd which occasioned it; but he happens to mention, what fully explains both, that it was shortly before the Passover. Now we know from Josephus and other sources that at the Passover enormous multitudes flocked to Jerusalem from all sides, so that Capernaum, which lay on a main road from the north, would naturally be thronged with persons 'coming and going;' and this explains everything. But can anyone think that the writer of the Fourth Gospel purposely made his account to harmonise with the other, and yet left the agreement so incidental that not one reader in a thousand ever discovers it? The only reasonable explanation is that the event was actually true, and that both writers had independent knowledge of this.

The objection, then, as to the connection of the Fourth Gospel with the Synoptic ones must be put aside. It was plainly meant to supplement them, and it shows not a different Christ, but a different aspect of the same Christ; while the slight discrepancies, especially when combined with the undesigned coincidences, support its genuineness.

(3.) *Its connection with the Book of Revelation.*

The other objection is perhaps a more important one. The Book of Revelation is now generally admitted to be the work of St. John. Indeed, the

evidence in favour of this is very strong, both internal and external, since it is expressly assigned to St. John by Justin Martyr,<sup>1</sup> and its date is generally fixed at A.D. 68. And yet it is said it cannot be by the same writer as the Fourth Gospel for three reasons. The first is, that while the Gospel is *anonymous*, the Revelation is not so. But this is easily explained, since in the Old Testament the Historical Books are nearly always anonymous, and the Prophetical ones never so ; and a Jew might naturally follow this example.

Secondly, there is a considerable *difference in style*. But this is partly accounted for by the difference in subject-matter ; the Gospel being a plain historical narrative, and the Revelation a prophetic vision. And the same writer, when treating of a different subject, or writing for a different purpose, or even at a different time of life, often uses a different style.

The third reason is that the *Greek* of the Revelation is very abrupt, with numerous faults of grammar, and quite unlike that of the Gospel, which is in good Greek. And therefore it is urged a Galilean fisherman like St. John, who might perhaps have written the former, could not have written the latter. But considering that *some parts* of the Revelation (Chap. 18 for instance) are in very good Greek, many critics consider that the abruptness of other parts was intentional, with a view of imitating the vigorous style of the Old Testament Prophets. But perhaps a better explanation is that the Revelation was written by St. John himself, and when writing the Gospel

<sup>1</sup> Dial. 81.

in his old age, he had the assistance of a Greek disciple.

On the other side, it must be remembered that though the two books are different in language, they are the same in their teaching ; for the characteristic doctrine of the Fourth Gospel, that of the Divinity of Christ, is asserted almost as plainly in the Revelation (see Chapter XX.). And even the striking expression that Christ is the *Logos*, or *Word*, occurs in both the Gospel and Revelation, though it is not found elsewhere in the New Testament, except in one of St. John's Epistles.<sup>1</sup> It was evidently a favourite term with this Apostle, though it is worth noting that he never puts it into the mouth of Christ Himself, which an unscrupulous biographer would not have hesitated to do.

On the whole, then, this objection is not an insuperable one, while, as already shown, the Fourth Gospel has very strong internal marks of genuineness. And when we combine these with the equally strong external testimony, it forces us to conclude that St. John was the author. This Gospel, then, like the Synoptic ones, must be considered *authentic* ; indeed, the evidence in favour of them all is overwhelming.

<sup>1</sup> John 1. 1 ; 1 John 1. 1 ; Rev. 19. 13.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THAT THE GOSPELS ARE AUTHENTIC FROM THE EVIDENCE OF THE ACTS.

Importance of the Acts, since it is by the same writer as the Third Gospel.

#### (A.) ITS ACCURACY.

Three examples :

- (1.) The titles of various rulers.
- (2.) The riot at Ephesus.
- (3.) Undesigned coincidences with St. Paul's Epistles.

#### (B.) ITS UNITY.

The *We* sections are not by a different author.

#### (C.) ITS AUTHORSHIP AND DATE.

The writer was a companion of St. Paul, and a medical man ; he was named Luke, and wrote about A.D. 60. And this shows an earlier date for all the Synoptic Gospels.

WE have now to consider an argument of great importance derived from the Acts of the Apostles. This book is universally admitted to be by the same writer as the Third Gospel, as is indeed obvious from the manner in which both are addressed to Theophilus, from the *former treatise* being mentioned in the opening verse of the Acts, and from the perfect agreement in style and language. Hence arguments for or against

the antiquity of the Acts affect the Third Gospel also, and therefore, to some extent, all the Synoptic Gospels. And though the external testimony to the book is not so strong as that to the Gospels, it has very strong internal marks of genuineness.

(A.) ITS ACCURACY.

And first as to its extreme accuracy. This book, unlike the Gospels, deals with a large number of public men and places, many of which are well known to us from secular history, while inscriptions referring to others have been recently discovered. It is thus liable to be detected at every step if inaccurate; and yet, with the doubtful exception of the date of the rebellion of Theudas,<sup>1</sup> no error can be discovered. As this is practically undisputed, we need not discuss the evidence in detail, but will give three examples only.

(I.) *The titles of various rulers.*

And we will commence with the *titles* given to different rulers. As is well known, the Roman provinces were of two kinds, imperial and senatorial, the former being governed by *proprætors*, or when less important by procurators, and the latter by *proconsuls*, though they frequently changed hands. Moreover, individual places had often special names for their rulers; and yet in every case the writer of the Acts uses the proper title. This is the more important because he was not specially writing about these matters, when he might be supposed to have studied the subject, but his allusions are all incidental, and yet all correct.

For example,<sup>2</sup> the ruler at Cyprus is rightly styled

<sup>1</sup> Acts 5. 36.      <sup>2</sup> Acts 13. 7; 18. 12; 19. 38; 23. 26; 26. 30; 28. 7.

*proconsul* ; for though Cyprus had previously belonged to the Emperor Augustus, it had been exchanged with the Senate for some other provinces before the time in question. And an inscription<sup>1</sup> found there at Soli has the words in Greek, *Paulus proconsul*, probably the Sergius Paulus of the Acts. Cyprus, it may be added, subsequently changed hands again. In the same way Gallio is correctly described as *proconsul* of Achaia. For though this province was imperial under Tiberius, and later on independent under Nero, it was senatorial under Claudius, when the writer referred to it. At Ephesus the mention of *proconsul* is equally correct ; so also is the title of *governor* or *procurator*, applied to both Felix and Festus ; while at Malta we read of the *chiefman* ; the accuracy of which title is also proved by inscriptions.<sup>2</sup>

Again, Herod Agrippa, shortly before his death, is styled *king*. Now we learn from other sources that he had this title for the last three years of his government (A.D. 41-44), though there had been no king in Judæa for the previous thirty years, nor for many centuries afterwards. Moreover, his son is also called *King* Agrippa, though it is implied that he was not king of Judæa, which was governed by Festus, but of some other provinces. And this also is quite correct ; and so too is the remarkable fact that his sister *Bernice* acted with him on public occasions.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cyprus, by Cesnola (London, 1877), p. 425.

<sup>2</sup> Corp. Ins. Lat. X., No. 7459 ; Corp. Ins. Gr., No. 5754.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 12. 1, 20 ; 25. 13, 23 ; Josephus, Antiq., xviii. 6, xix. 5 ; Wars, ii. 12, 16 ; Life, xi.

Similarly the names *prætors* and *lictors* for the magistrates and sergeants at Philippi are quite correct, since that was a Roman colony, though they would not be proper elsewhere. At Thessalonica, again, the magistrates are called *politarchs*, translated 'rulers of the city.'<sup>1</sup> This name does not occur in any classical author, and consequently the writer of the Acts used to be accused of a blunder here. His critics were unaware that an old arch was standing all the time at this very place, the modern Salonica, with an inscription containing this very word, saying it was built when certain men were the *politarchs*. The arch was destroyed in 1867, but the block of stones containing the inscription was preserved, and is now in the British Museum.

(2.) *The riot at Ephesus.*

As a second example we will take the account of the *riot at Ephesus*. All the allusions here to the worship of Diana, including her image believed to have fallen from heaven, her magnificent shrine, the small silver models of this which were used as charms, her widespread worship, and the fanatical devotion of her worshippers, are all in strict agreement with what we know from other sources.

Moreover, inscriptions discovered there have corroborated the narrative in a remarkable manner. They have shown that the *theatre* was the recognised place of public meeting; that there were certain officers (who presided at games, etc.) called *asiarchs*; that another well-known Ephesian officer was called

<sup>1</sup> Acts 16. 22, 35; 17. 6.

the *town-clerk* ; that Ephesus had the curious designation of *temple-keeper* of Diana ; that *temple-robbing* and *profaneness* were both crimes which were specially recognised by the Ephesian laws ; and that the term *regular assembly* was a technical one in use at Ephesus.<sup>1</sup> All this minute accuracy is hard to explain unless the writer knew Ephesus remarkably well, or else was present during the riot, and recorded what he actually saw and heard.

(3.) *Undesigned coincidences with St. Paul's Epistles.*

Our third example shall be of a different kind from the preceding. If we compare the biography of St. Paul given in the Acts with the letters of that Apostle, many of them written to the very Churches and persons described there, we shall find a complete though unobtrusive agreement between them. These *undesigned coincidences* are both numerous and striking, and very unlikely for a forger to have thought of. Here we must confine ourselves to a single Epistle, and select that to the *Romans*, which is one of those universally admitted to be genuine. Though not actually dated, it was evidently written at the close of St. Paul's second visit to Greece ; and thus, if mentioned in the Acts, would come in at 20. 3 ; and its incidental notices are all consistent with this time and place.

To begin with, St. Paul says that he was going up to Jerusalem, with alms from Macedonia and Achaia

<sup>1</sup> *Comp.* Acts 19. 29-39 ; with inscriptions found in the Great Theatre. Wood's Discoveries at Ephesus, 1877, pp. 43, 47, 53, 51, 15, 39.



for the poor in that city. Now in the Acts it is stated that St. Paul had just passed through these provinces, and was on his way to Jerusalem, though there is no mention about the alms here. But it happens to be retrospectively alluded to some chapters later, without, however, mentioning then where the alms came from.<sup>1</sup>

We also learn that St. Paul's missionary travels up till now had extended from Jerusalem as far as *Illyricum*. Now *Illyricum* is not once mentioned in the Acts; so there can be no intentional agreement here, but yet there is agreement. For we gather from various places that St. Paul had preached from Jerusalem all through what we now call Asia Minor, and just before the date of this Epistle had gone through Macedonia, which was his limit in this direction. And as this was the adjacent province to *Illyricum*, it exactly agrees with the Epistle.<sup>2</sup>

Among other points of agreement may be mentioned St. Paul's friendship with Aquila and Priscilla, who had now apparently returned to Rome; that he had himself long wished to visit Rome, and intended doing so after his visit to Jerusalem;<sup>3</sup> that his feelings were very despondent as he set out on his return journey to the latter city, having doubts as to what would befall him there; and that Timothy, Gaius, and Sosipater among others were with him when he wrote.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 15. 25, 26; Acts 19. 21; 24. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 15. 19; Acts 20. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 15. 23, 25; 16. 3; Acts 18. 2; 19. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 15. 30; 16. 21-23; Acts 20. 4, 22.

In regard to all these passages, it should be noticed that the coincidence is in every case *undesigned*. This is the whole point of the argument, though, unfortunately, alluding to the statements in the above abbreviated manner often gives the idea that they are identical, and might easily be copied one from the other. But if anyone will take the trouble to compare the parallel statements with their contexts, he will see that this is out of the question. In other words, the writer of the Acts, whoever he was, did not gain his information on these points from this Epistle, but had independent knowledge of them. And if so, considering that they include St. Paul's plans and feelings, as well as the extent of his travels, etc., it follows that he must have been an intimate companion of his. And, as before said, this is a mere sample of the evidence.

While, however, there are thus numerous slight and undesigned coincidences, several more obvious ones do not occur ; and there are even some apparent discrepancies between the Acts and Galatians. These can indeed be reconciled. But what if they could not ? A late writer must have known Galatians, and must have known that his readers knew it too ; and is he likely to have seemed to contradict it ?

We may now sum up the evidence as to the accuracy of the Acts. The above instances are only specimens of many which might be given. The writer knew Jerusalem and Athens just as well as Ephesus. While his account of St. Paul's voyage from Cæsarea to Italy, including as it does the topography of a variety of places, the climate, prevailing winds, and harbours

of the Mediterranean, and the phrases and customs of seamen, is so accurate, that critics of all schools have admitted that he is describing a voyage he had actually experienced. In short, the Book of the Acts is full of correct details throughout, and it is hard to believe that anyone but a contemporary could have written it.

(B.) ITS UNITY.

We have next to consider whether the book was the work of a single man or a compilation. As is well known, certain portions are written in the first person plural, and are commonly called the '*We*' sections.<sup>1</sup> The most obvious explanation of this, and the one generally adopted, is that the writer was a *companion* of St. Paul during these portions of his travels; and the internal evidence is strongly in favour of a common authorship for these sections and the rest of the book.

In the first place, the *language* is extremely similar, there being numerous coincidences in style, and the use in common of about forty words and expressions which do not occur elsewhere in the New Testament except in the Third Gospel. This is indeed so striking that critics who maintain a different authorship admit that the compiler who incorporated the earlier *We* sections in his own narrative re-wrote them to some extent in his own style. But this would require great literary skill on his part, and it is inconceivable that he should have allowed the tell-tale *We* to remain at all. It is clearly the first thing he would have altered.

There are also slight *historical* connections between the two portions. A single example must suffice here.

<sup>1</sup> Acts 16. 9-40; 20. 5-21. 18; 27. 1-28. 16.

In the earlier chapters several incidents are recorded, in which Philip, one of the *Seven*, was concerned ; and why should these have been selected ? The writer was not present himself, and many far more important events must have occurred, of which he gives no account. But a casual verse in the *We* sections explains everything : the writer, we are told, stayed *many days* with Philip, and of course learnt these particulars then. And as it seems to have been his rule only to record what he knew for certain, he might well have left out other and more important events, of which he had not such accurate knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

With all this evidence, then, in favour of the unity of the book, why, it may be asked, do some critics wish to split it up ? The reason is of course to get rid of any contemporary evidence as to *Miracles*. The book as a whole records numerous miracles, and yet its marks of genuineness in some places are too strong to be denied. Accordingly, the *We* sections, which have perhaps the stronger marks of genuineness, and certainly the fewer miracles, are alone allowed to be authentic. Here, it is said, we have the original non-miraculous diary of one of St. Paul's companions, which some writer of the second century published with many marvellous additions of his own, besides re-writing the whole in his own style.

But this theory cannot possibly be accepted. It is, in the first place, *improbable*, because a late writer could hardly have obtained so exclusive possession of such a diary as to be able to publish an 'improved'

<sup>1</sup> Acts 6. 5 ; 8. 5-13, 26-40 ; 21. 10 ; Luke 1. 3.

edition of it without anyone detecting the fraud. Next, it is from its own point of view *inadequate*, because, as a matter of fact, the *We* sections do contain some miracles;<sup>1</sup> while many of the others, such as the riot at Ephesus, bear equally strong marks of genuineness. While, lastly, it is opposed to all the *evidence*, because there is not only the universal testimony of antiquity in favour of the unity of the book, but, as we have seen, the book itself bears strong marks of unity throughout.

(C.) ITS AUTHORSHIP AND DATE.

Now, if we admit the accuracy and unity of the book, there is little difficulty in deciding on both its authorship and date. From the *We* sections we learn that the writer was a *companion* of St. Paul in many of his travels, including his voyage to Rome, where he apparently stayed with him two years. There is also another reason for thinking that the writer was a personal friend of St. Paul, and this is from his account of St. Paul's *speeches*. We have numerous letters of this Apostle, and thus know his style and language well; and on examining the speeches attributed to him all through the Acts, we find that they are thoroughly *Pauline* in character. In particular may be mentioned his speech at Athens, which so closely resembles the style of St. Paul, that even hostile critics have been forced to admit its genuineness, though it may be added it does not occur in the *We* sections.

And yet, strange to say, the writer does not appear to have known St. Paul's Epistles, at least there are no obvious quotations from them, and in his biography

<sup>1</sup> Acts 16. 18, 26; 28. 6, 8-9.

of St. Paul he never once alludes to his having written any letters at all. This latter circumstance alone would point to the great antiquity of the book, and when combined with the former, it clearly indicates that the writer's acquaintance with St. Paul's language was derived not from his writings, but from himself ; in other words, that he was his intimate friend.

But it is urged on the other side that some of these speeches also show traces of the writer's own language. But what if they do ? Would it not be only natural for a writer who heard St. Paul's speeches, and afterwards wrote them down from short notes or memory, to have occasionally introduced an expression of his own ; more especially as the recorded speeches can only be *abstracts* of what was actually said ? St. Paul, for instance, at Athens is not likely to have spoken for less than half an hour ; whereas his speech in the Acts would not take more than three minutes.<sup>1</sup> And if anyone will try to reduce a half-hour's speech to three minutes, he will see that it is almost impossible to give a connected and fair outline of the speech, without introducing some extra words. On the other hand, if a second-century writer had got possession of some genuine speeches of St. Paul, he is more likely to have quoted them verbatim.

We also learn indirectly from the book itself that the writer was a *medical man*. The evidence for this is overwhelming, but as the fact is generally admitted, we need not discuss it at length. Suffice it to say that 201 places have been counted in the Acts, and

<sup>1</sup> Acts 17. 22-31.

252 in the Third Gospel, where words and expressions occur which are specially, and many of them exclusively, used by Greek medical writers, and which, with few exceptions, do not occur elsewhere in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup>

For instance, we read of the many proofs of the resurrection; the word translated *proofs* being frequently used by medical writers to express the infallible symptoms of a disease, in opposition to its mere signs, which may be doubtful, and they expressly give it this meaning. Again we read of the restoration of all things; the word translated *restoration* being the regular medical term for a complete recovery of body or limb. And we read of a great sheet let down at four corners; the words translated *sheet* and *corners* being the medical terms for a linen bandage and its ends. Or to take an example from the Third Gospel, we read of the camel going through the eye of a needle; the word for *needle* not being the same as is used by the other Evangelists, but being expressed by a combination of two medical terms, not found elsewhere in the New Testament, the one being the regular word for a perforation, and the other for a surgical needle.<sup>2</sup>

From internal evidence, then, we conclude that the writer was an intimate friend of St. Paul and a medical man; and from one of St. Paul's Epistles we learn his name, *Luke the beloved physician*.<sup>3</sup> In confirmation of this it may be mentioned that both this Epistle and that to Philemon, where St. Paul also names Luke as his

<sup>1</sup> Hobart's Medical Language of St. Luke (1882).

<sup>2</sup> Acts 1. 3; 3. 21; 10. 11; Luke 18. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Col. 4. 14.

companion, appear to have been written from Rome, when, as we have seen, the writer of the Acts was with him. And he seems to have remained with him to the last.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, this beloved and ever-faithful friend of St. Paul is not once named in the Acts, which would be most unlikely unless he were the author himself; while many other friends of St. Paul are mentioned, and in such a way as to show that they could not be the writer.<sup>2</sup>

And the *date* of the book can also be fixed with tolerable certainty. It is implied in its abrupt ending. The last thing it narrates is St. Paul's living at Rome, two years before his trial. It says nothing about this trial, nor of St. Paul's release, nor of his subsequent travels, nor of his second trial and martyrdom (probably under Nero, A.D. 64); though had it been written after these events, it could hardly have failed to record them. Some critics, it is true, maintain that the writer intended to narrate all this in a *third* volume, but this is mere guesswork. No trace of such a volume exists, nor is there any reference to it in early writers.

On the other hand, the abrupt ending is at once accounted for if we assume that the book was written at that time, about A.D. 60, by St. Luke,<sup>3</sup> who did not relate anything further, because nothing further had then occurred. And it is obvious that these two years (58-60) would not only have formed a most suitable

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. 4. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 15. 22; 20. 4.

<sup>3</sup> The date previously given, A.D. 63, is now generally admitted to be three years too late. Rackham's Commentary on the Acts, 1901, p. lxvii.



period for its compilation, but that he is very likely to have sent it to his friend Theophilus just before the trial, perhaps somewhat hurriedly, not knowing whether it might not involve his own death, as well as that of St. Paul. And this would also account for the great prominence given to the events of the immediately preceding years in chapters 20. to 28., which is quite unintelligible, unless the book was written soon afterwards. They were nothing like as important as the events of the next few years, as to which the writer says nothing.

Moreover his attitude towards the Roman Government affords another strong argument in favour of an early date. For the Roman judges and officials are always represented as treating the Christians with fairness, and even kindness; and the writer leaves St. Paul appealing to Cæsar, with every hope of a favourable verdict. There is no sign of bitterness or ill-feeling anywhere. And all this would have been most unlikely after the great persecution in A.D. 64; when, as we learn from the Book of Revelation, the Christians regarded Rome with the utmost horror, as *drunk with the blood of the martyrs*.

Compare the somewhat similar case of the Indian Mutiny. Can we imagine an Englishman in India writing soon after the Mutiny a history, say of Cawnpore, up to 1854, and then closing it, without ever letting a hint fall that he was aware of the terrible tragedy which happened in 1857, or showing the slightest ill-feeling towards its perpetrators? The only reasonable conclusion would be that such a history must have been written *before* the Mutiny. In the

same way the Acts must have been written *before* Nero's great persecution.

On the whole then there is very strong evidence in favour of the Acts of the Apostles having been written by St. Luke about A.D. 60 ; and this of course proves an earlier date for *St. Luke's Gospel*. And this again proves a still earlier date for *St. Mark's Gospel*, or at least the greater part of it, which is now generally admitted to be the source from which St. Luke got his portion of the so-called Triple Tradition. And it is very probable that *St. Matthew's Gospel* was also earlier than St. Luke's. The evidence of the Acts then, while confirming our previous conclusion that the Synoptic Gospels were certainly written before A.D. 70, enables us to add with some confidence (at least it seems so to the present writer) that they were also written before A.D. 60. It has of course no direct bearing on the date of St. John's Gospel.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THAT THEREFORE THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS PROBABLY TRUE.

Importance of the Resurrection ; table of Christ's appearances ; meaning of First Witnesses. The value of all testimony depends on four questions concerning the witnesses, and in this case the denial of each corresponds to the four chief alternative theories.

#### (A.) THEIR VERACITY.

Did they speak the truth as far as they knew it ? They were generally truthful, and had no motive for preaching the Resurrection unless they believed it, while their conduct and sufferings showed them to be thoroughly convinced of it ; so we may dismiss the *Falschhood* Theory at once.

#### (B.) THEIR KNOWLEDGE.

Had they the means of knowing the truth ? If the Gospels are authentic, amply sufficient means were within their reach, and they were quite competent to use them ; so the *Legend* Theory must also be dismissed.

#### (C.) THEIR INVESTIGATION.

Did they avail themselves of these means ? There were strong reasons for their doing so, but possibly they did not, from their excited state of mind. This is the *Vision* Theory, which, however, has enormous difficulties.

#### (D.) THEIR REASONING.

Did they draw the right conclusion ? Admitting that Christ's appearances were real, might it not be explained by His not having died ? This *Swoon* Theory, as it is called, has also enormous difficulties.

#### (E.) CONCLUSION.

The alleged difficulties of the Christian Theory.

WE decided in the previous chapters that the Four Gospels, and also the Acts of the Apostles, were *authentic*; that is to say, they were actually written by the writers to whom they are commonly ascribed. And to these may be added the four great Epistles of St. Paul and the Revelation of St. John, which, as before said, are admitted to be genuine by critics of all schools. We have thus direct testimony as to the alleged teaching and miracles of Christ, that is to say, the testimony of contemporaries, some of whom must have known Him well. St. Matthew and St. John were two of His Apostles. St. Luke declares that he got his information from *eye-witnesses*; and if he was the companion of Cleopas, which is perhaps probable, he must have had some slight knowledge of Christ himself, as had also St. Paul. And doubtless St. Mark had too when he was young, as his mother had a house at Jerusalem, where Christians used to assemble.<sup>1</sup>

We have now to consider the value of this testimony, more especially as to the alleged *Resurrection of Christ*, which fact, either real or supposed, was the foundation of Christianity. This is plain not only from the Gospels, but still more from the Acts, where we have numerous short sermons by the Apostles, in nearly all of which the Resurrection is not only positively asserted, but is frequently emphasised as a fact established by indisputable evidence, and as being the foundation of Christianity.<sup>2</sup> It is even said that it was

<sup>1</sup> Luke 1. 2; 2 Cor. 5. 16; Acts 12. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 2. 24; 3. 15; 4. 10; 5. 30; 10. 40; 13. 30; 17. 31; 26. 23.

the special duty of an apostle to bear witness to it ; and St. Paul seems to have been aware of this, since, in maintaining his apostleship, he is careful to show that he was thus qualified, and for himself he makes it the *sine quâ non* of his teaching.<sup>1</sup> It is certain, then, that the first preachers of Christianity preached the Resurrection of Christ.

Now we have five different accounts of the Resurrection, though little stress can be laid on St. Mark's, as the genuineness of the last verses is doubtful. On the other hand, St. Paul's account, which is perhaps the strongest, is universally allowed to have been written within thirty years of the event ; the most probable date for which is A.D. 29, and for the Epistle A.D. 54. And it should be noticed that St. Paul expressly reminds the Corinthians that what he here relates concerning the Resurrection is what he preached to them on his first visit (about A.D. 50), and that he had himself *received* it from others at a still earlier date.

And we can even fix this date approximately, for two of the appearances he records are to St. Peter and St. James ; and he happens to mention elsewhere that these were the two Apostles he met at Jerusalem, three years after his conversion ; so he doubtless heard the whole account then.<sup>2</sup> And this was certainly within *ten years* of the Crucifixion. More ancient testimony than this can scarcely be desired. And if anything could add to its importance it would be St. Paul's own declaration that in this respect his teaching

<sup>1</sup> Acts 1. 22 ; 1 Cor. 9. 1 ; 15. 12-19.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. 1. 19.

was the same as that of the original Apostles : *Whether then it be I or they, so we preach and so ye believed.*<sup>1</sup>

We need not quote the various accounts here, but the following table exhibits them in a convenient form for reference :

TABLE OF CHRIST'S APPEARANCES.					
<i>Christ was seen by</i>	<i>1 Cor.</i>	<i>Matt.</i>	<i>Mark.</i>	<i>Luke.</i>	<i>John.</i>
(i.) St. Mary Magdalene . . . }	..	..	16.9-11	..	20.11-18
(ii.) Several women . . . }	..	28. 1-10	(1-8)	24. (1-12)	..
(iii.) St. Peter . . . }	15. 5	..	..	34	..
(iv.) Cleopas and another, perhaps St. Luke, at Emmaus . . . }	..	..	12-13	13-35	..
(v.) The Apostles and others (less St. Thomas) . . . }	5	..	14	36-43	19-25
(vi.) The Apostles (with St. Thomas) . . . }	..	..	..	..	26-29
(vii.) Seven Apostles at Sea of Tiberias . . . }	..	..	..	..	21. 1-23
(viii.) The Apostles in Galilee . . . }	..	16-20	15-18	..	..
(ix.) Over 500 persons . . . }	6	..	..	..	..
(x.) St. James . . . }	7	..	..	..	..
(xi.) The Apostles at Jerusalem . . . }	..	..	..	44-49	<i>Acts.</i> 1. 4-5
(xii.) The Apostles at Bethany . . . }	7	..	19-20	50-53	1. 6-11
(xiii.) St. Paul . . . }	8	..	..	..	9. 3-9

There is a difficulty in reconciling some of the accounts, but this seems to be chiefly due to the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 15. 11.

Evangelists recording separate appearances, as if they were continuous. Thus St. Luke in his Gospel describes the appearances from the Resurrection to the Ascension, as if they occurred in a few hours ; while in the Acts he expressly says there were *forty days* between them. He evidently thought it unnecessary to explain that they were at different times ; and if the other Evangelists did the same, it would account for most, though not all, of the discrepancies between them.

These discrepancies, however, are often much exaggerated. Take for instance No. (v.) in the previous list. St. Luke and St. John evidently refer to the same occasion, as it was on the evening of the Resurrection day ; and yet one says the Apostles were *terrified*, and thought they saw a spirit ; while the other says they were *glad*. Can both be true ? Certainly they can, if we assume (as is most natural) that the Apostles were *at first* terrified, and thought they saw a spirit ; but were afterwards glad, when on Christ's showing them His hands and side, they were at last convinced that it was really Himself. And He may then have upbraided them for their unbelief as recorded by St. Mark.

Altogether, Christ seems to have been seen on thirteen different occasions, though there may have been others which are not recorded (they are perhaps hinted at in Acts 1. 3), as the Evangelists nowhere profess to give a complete list of His appearances, any more than of His miracles or parables, they only record selected instances. And the fact of their not repro-

ducing St. Paul's list is a distinct argument in favour of their early date. Had they been written after his Epistle got into circulation, it is scarcely conceivable that they should have disregarded it in so important a matter; unless, of course, they were written by men (like St. John) whose authority no one would question.

And the narratives themselves bear signs of an extremely early, in fact a *contemporary* date. Thus the Apostles are represented as still expecting the kingdom of Israel to be restored; and (what is very significant) they are spoken of as *the Eleven*, though they could only have had this title for *just these few weeks*. And the fact of their having had it seems to have been soon forgotten: for St. Paul even when alluding to this very time prefers to call them by the familiar title of *the Twelve*, which was in a certain sense correct, as St. Matthias, who was afterwards elected as the twelfth, had been with them all along.<sup>1</sup> And therefore the use of the former term in the Synoptic Gospels seems to show that the original narratives were either written at the time, or at least by men who took part in those momentous events, and from whose memories the terms then in use were not easily effaced. While the utter absence of any attempt at harmonising the narratives, or avoiding the discrepancies just alluded to, also points to their extreme antiquity.

Now we will use the term *First Witnesses* for all those persons who saw, or said they saw, Christ alive after His

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 28. 16: Mark 16. 14; Luke 24. 9, 33; Acts 1. 6, 22; 1 Cor. 15. 5.



Crucifixion. This will include the twelve Apostles, and over 500 other Christians, most of whom St. Paul declares were still alive when he wrote, and evidently able to corroborate what he said. And before discussing the value of their testimony, it may be well to glance at certain general rules in regard to all testimony. If, then, a person plainly asserts that an event took place, before we believe that it did take place, we must inquire first as to his *Veracity* : did he speak the truth as far as he knew it ? Next as to his *Knowledge* : had he the means of knowing the truth ? Next as to his *Investigation* : did he avail himself of those means ? And lastly, as to his *Reasoning* : did he draw the right conclusion ?

The following example will show the sense in which these terms are used. Suppose a person said that he went to London yesterday. Usually his veracity only need be determined. But now suppose he were blind, then we should have to assure ourselves of his knowledge : had he the means of knowing whether the place was London or not ? And granting that he had such means—as, for instance, if trustworthy friends accompanied him—we might still have to inquire as to his investigation : did he avail himself of those means ? Possibly he felt sure it was London, and never asked his friends. Or again, suppose the person was a child ; then his reasoning must be determined : was he sufficiently educated to draw the right conclusion from what he saw and heard ?

And it should be noticed that all possible ways of denying the truth of a statement can be brought under

one or other of these heads. For if a man's statement is not true, it must be either :—

Intentionally false . . . . . = want of Veracity.

or	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{had not the} \\ \text{means of} \\ \text{knowing} \\ \text{the truth .} \end{array} \right\}$	. . . = want of Know-
Unintentionally	or	
false, in which		
case he either	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{h a d t h e} \\ \text{means, and} \\ \text{either . .} \end{array} \right\}$	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{did not} \\ \text{use them} \end{array} \right\}$ = want of Investi- gation.

From this it is clear that for anyone to deny a man's statement without disputing his veracity, knowledge, investigation, or reasoning, is very much like denying that one given angle is greater than another without disputing that it is neither equal to it nor less than it. We have now to apply these general rules to the testimony in favour of the Resurrection of Christ.

#### (A.) THE VERACITY OF THE WITNESSES.

Now, that the first witnesses all asserted that Christ rose from the dead and appeared to them is, as we have seen, indisputable ; so obviously the first question is as to their veracity : did they really believe this themselves ? To deny this would be to adopt the *Falsehood Theory*, which is that they were deliberate impostors, who, knowing and believing that their Master did not rise from the dead, yet spent their whole lives in trying to persuade people that He did. And it will be seen that their character, their motives, and especially their conduct, are all strongly opposed to such a theory.

Their *character* can be best judged by the religion they founded ; and everyone will admit that Christianity is not a Religion likely to have been founded by impostors. Moreover, these very accounts of the Resurrection bear every sign of truthfulness. The writers seem to narrate just what they believed to have happened, often mentioning the most trivial circumstances, and without ever attempting to meet difficulties or objections ; while the disjointed, and to some extent discordant, narratives, are precisely such as we should expect from the actual witnesses of a stupendous miracle, and are not such as would have been deliberately invented. Nor is it conceivable that writers of fiction would have made Christ first appear to so little known a person as Mary Magdalene rather than to His Mother or His Apostles.

Again, the *kind* of Resurrection asserted was not one which impostors would have chosen. It was not, as before said (Chapter XIII.), a resuscitation of Christ's natural body, but His Resurrection in a body which combined material and spiritual properties in a remarkable manner. And there was nothing in the Old Testament, or anywhere else, to suggest such a Resurrection as this ; it was quite unique. Nor is it likely that impostors would have ascribed an *altered appearance* to Christ's body, so that He was often not recognised at first. Nor, again, would they have said that some of them *doubted* the Resurrection, which was hardly the way to get other people to believe it. We conclude, therefore, that the general character of the first witnesses is strongly against their speaking what

they believed to be untrue, while their narratives are in many respects the very opposite to what impostors would be likely to have written.

Next as to their *motives*. Had they any interest in asserting that Christ rose from the dead unless they really believed it? Merely to say that they could have had no interest, would be to understate the argument immensely. Every motive told the other way. They were a mere handful of men, so few or so faint-hearted that they could not prevent their Master being crucified. What chance was there then of persuading the world that He had risen from the dead, and why should they have embarked on such a hopeless scheme? Nothing but the most firm conviction of their Lord's Resurrection, and therefore of supernatural assistance, would ever have induced men to have ventured on it. If they believed the Resurrection to be true, then, and only then, would they have had any motive whatever for preaching it. While, then, it is plain that the Apostles were not *unbiassed* witnesses, in the sense of witnesses who had no personal interest in the matter, it is equally plain that their evidence is the more valuable on this account, as all their interest was the other way.

Lastly, as to their *conduct*, did this show that they really believed what they preached? And here also the evidence is overwhelming. It is admitted by everyone that when their Master was crucified His followers were filled with gloom and despair. This was only natural. But in a few days (St. Paul's evidence alone is sufficient to show that it was on the

*third* day) this sorrow was changed to intense joy and confidence. They preached the Resurrection in the very place where He was crucified, and boldly went forth to convert the world in His name. It is clear that before such a marvellous change could take place they must at all events have thought they had, what St. Luke asserts they actually did have, *many proofs* of the Resurrection.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, in preaching such an extraordinary event, especially in cultured cities like Rome and Corinth, the first witnesses would have been subjected to more than usual cross-examination. Some at least in every city would have used all possible means of finding out the truth, and impostors could hardly have stood, or withstood, such an inquiry. And yet St. Paul's Epistles prove that within thirty years the Resurrection was believed by numbers of men in these distant cities. And what is very important, it was believed by *educated* men, for his method of reasoning, especially in his Epistle to the Romans, shows that he thought his readers quite able to follow a difficult argument.

But even this is not all, for the conduct of the first witnesses in preaching the new religion exposed them to lifelong *suffering* and *persecution*; and as this is a very important point, we must examine it in some detail. Now voluntary suffering in any form, but especially in its extreme form of martyrdom, seems conclusive as to a man's veracity; for persons do not suffer for what they believe to be false. They must have believed it to be true, though this does not of

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 3.

course prove that it was true. And here is the answer to the common objection, that since all religions have had their martyrs, this kind of evidence proves nothing. On the contrary, it does prove something, though it does not prove everything. It does not prove that what the man died for was true, but it does prove that he believed it to be true. It is therefore a conclusive test as to his veracity.

What evidence have we, then, that the first witnesses suffered for the truth of what they preached? The evidence is complete and overwhelming. To begin with, each of the *Four Gospels* represents Christ as foretelling the persecution of His immediate followers, *i.e.*, the first witnesses.<sup>1</sup> And without assuming that He really did this, it is clear that such words would not be subsequently put into His mouth as a pretended prediction unless the event corresponded with it.

In the next place, the *Acts of the Apostles* directly records the sufferings which several of them, such as St. Peter, St. John, St. James, and St. Paul, had to undergo. And it should be noticed that this book is not avowedly an account of persecutions, but they are only recorded as part of the general history, and without any apparent exaggeration.

Thirdly, the admittedly genuine *Epistles of St. Paul* fully support this conclusion. For in one of them he gives a list of the actual sufferings he had then undergone; which, it may be noticed, is in excess of those in the Acts, showing that the sufferings there recorded are far from complete. He also alludes to his sufferings

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 10. 17; Mark 13. 9; Luke 21. 12; John 16. 2.

in numerous other places, and often as if they were the common lot of all Christians at the time; while in one passage he expressly includes the other Apostles in the long list of sufferings he describes, which he says had made them a spectacle to the whole world. Moreover, elsewhere he alludes to the sufferings of the Christians at a still earlier time, for he assures us that he himself before his conversion persecuted the Church beyond measure, and made havoc of it.<sup>1</sup>

And if further evidence is required, it is afforded by the *Book of Revelation*; for this speaks not only of sufferings, but of martyrdoms, voluntarily endured by Christians; and considering its early date (A.D. 68), which is generally admitted, this must have been contemporary with the first witnesses.<sup>2</sup> While, of course, the fact of their persecution under Nero is fully confirmed by Tacitus.<sup>3</sup>

There can thus be no doubt as to the constant sufferings of the first witnesses. And it is equally certain that men do not choose a life of suffering except upon conviction. The men, therefore, who did this must have believed their religion to be true, and this always included the Resurrection of Christ as a fundamental part. In short, their conduct is alone sufficient to prove their veracity, for impostors would not have behaved as they behaved. We conclude therefore that when they asserted that Christ rose from the dead, they were asserting what they honestly believed, whether rightly or wrongly, to be true.

<sup>1</sup> E.g., 2 Cor. 11. 24-27; Rom. 8. 35; 1 Cor. 4. 9-13; Gal. 1. 13.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., Rev. 1. 9; 2. 13; 17. 6.      <sup>3</sup> Tac. Annals, Bk. xv., ch. 44.

And it should be noticed, as this belief was due, not to any *a priori* reasoning, or philosophical speculation, but resulted simply from the witnesses believing that they actually saw Christ alive after His death, we must conclude further that they honestly believed in the appearances of Christ as recorded by themselves in the New Testament ; in other words, these accounts are not *intentionally* false.

(B.) THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE WITNESSES.

We pass on now to their knowledge : had they the means of knowing whether Christ rose from the dead ? To deny this would be to adopt the *Legend Theory*, which is that our Gospels are not authentic, but merely record subsequent legends, and therefore we cannot say whether the first witnesses had or had not the means of knowing the truth. But if we admit the authenticity of the writings and the veracity of the writers, both of which have been admitted, this Legend Theory is quite untenable.

They asserted, it will be remembered, that Christ's Body, not His Spirit, appeared to them after the crucifixion ; and from their own accounts it is clear that they had ample means of finding out whether this was true. Whether they used these means, and actually did find out, is, of course, another question ; but as to sufficient means being available, and their being quite competent to use them if they liked, there can be no doubt whatever. As has been well said, i was not one person, but many who saw Him ; they saw Him not only separately, but together ; not only by night, but by day ; not only at a distance, but near ;



not once, but several times ; they not only saw Him, but touched Him, conversed with Him, ate with Him, and examined His Person to satisfy their doubts. In fact, according to their own accounts, Christ seems to have convinced them in every way in which conviction was possible that He had risen from the dead.

It may also be added, that even if we deny the authenticity of the Gospels, the Legend Theory is still untenable. For St. Paul mentions several of the appearances, and as this was within a few years of the events, there was no time for the growth of legends. Moreover, being an educated man, he is not likely to have been taken in by imposture, while his language in 1 Cor. 15 implies that he had carefully investigated the fact, and was evidently well aware of the difficulty it involved. His testimony is thus very valuable from every point of view.

(C.) THE INVESTIGATION OF THE WITNESSES.

By the investigation of a witness is meant, as before explained, his availing himself of the means he had of ascertaining the truth or otherwise of what he stated. And in the present case everything was in favour of the witnesses doing this. For the Resurrection of Christ was an event of supreme importance to the witnesses themselves, who were prepared to risk their lives for it ; while its truth or otherwise could easily have been ascertained, and they had ample means of doing so. If, then, we deny their investigation, it must be because of their supposed state of mind, their enthusiasm, or their excitement, or something of that kind.

This would be to adopt what is called the *Vision*

*Theory*, which is that the Apostles so expected their Lord to appear to them after His death, and kept so dwelling on the thought of Him, as though unseen, yet perhaps very near to them, that after a time they thought they actually saw Him, and that He had really risen from the dead. The wish was, in fact, father to the thought; so that when a supposed appearance took place, they were so filled with joy at their Master's presence, that they neglected to ascertain whether the appearance they saw was real, or only due to their own fancy.

With regard to this theory, we must at once admit that it is possible for an honest man to mistake a phantom of his own brain, arising from some diseased state of the mind or body, for a reality in the outer world. Such *subjective* visions are by no means unheard of, though they are not common. And of course the great argument in its favour is that it professes to account for the alleged Resurrection, without on the one hand admitting its truth, or on the other that the witnesses were deliberate impostors. Here, it is urged, is a way of avoiding both difficulties, by allowing that the witnesses honestly believed all they said, only they were mistaken in supposing the appearances to be real, when they were merely due to their own imagination.

Let us now consider how this Vision Theory would suit the accounts of the Resurrection written by the witnesses themselves. As will be seen, we might almost imagine that they had been written on purpose to contradict it. To begin with, the writers were not

unacquainted with visions, and occasionally record them as happening to themselves or others. But then they always use suitable expressions, such as falling into a trance.<sup>1</sup> No such language is used in the Gospels to describe the appearances of Christ, which are always recorded as if they were actual matters of fact.

Next it is plain from all the accounts that the Apostles did not *expect* the Resurrection, and were much surprised at it. With regard to some of the appearances, we have no details, and so no means of judging. But wherever we have, with the single exception of that to the Apostles in Galilee, Christ's appearance was wholly unexpected. No one was looking for it, no one was anticipating it. Nor were the appearances of such a kind as would have been suggested by enthusiasm. They were simple, plain, and often trivial in their character, very different from what enthusiasm would have suggested. And, with the single exception of that to St. Paul, they ceased within a few weeks, though the enthusiasm of the witnesses lasted through life, and this alone is a strong argument against the Vision Theory.

Thirdly, and this is very remarkable, when Christ did appear to His disciples, He was often not *recognised* at first. This was the case with St. Mary Magdalene, with Cleopas and his companion, and with the disciples at Tiberias. But it is plain that, if they so hoped and expected to see their risen Master, that they eventually fancied they did see Him, they would at once have

<sup>1</sup> Acts 10. 10 ; 22. 17.

recognised Him. Their not doing so is quite incompatible with the Vision Theory, and hence, if this theory is true, the record of these appearances at least must be intentionally false, for in each case His not being recognised is an essential part of the incident.

Fourthly, we are repeatedly told that at first some of the disciples *disbelieved* or *doubted* the Resurrection.<sup>1</sup> This is an important point, since it shows that opinions were divided on the subject, and therefore makes it almost certain that they would have used what means they had of finding out the truth. Moreover, some of them remained doubtful even after the others were convinced, and St. Thomas in particular required the most convincing proof. His state of mind was certainly not that of an enthusiast, since, instead of being so convinced of the Resurrection as to have imagined it, he could with great difficulty be got to believe it. Indeed, according to these accounts, scarcely one of the first witnesses believed the Resurrection till the belief was almost forced on him. If, then, the Vision Theory is true, this necessitates an additional portion of our accounts being altogether untrue.

In the next place, subjective visions do not occur to different persons *simultaneously*. A man's private illusions (like his dreams) are his own. A lot of men do not simultaneously dream the same dream, still less do they simultaneously see the same subjective vision. Such a phenomenon may perhaps happen to one person in ten thousand once in his life. It is difficult to believe that even two persons should be

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 28. 17; Mark 16. 11-14; Luke 24. 11, 37; John 20. 25.

so affected at the same time, while the idea that a dozen or more men should simultaneously see the same subjective vision is out of the question. And yet only four out of the twelve appearances were to individuals.

But sixthly, this hypothesis does not account for many of the actual *facts* recorded—facts concerning which, unless the writings are intentionally false, there could be no doubt whatever. Persons could not have honestly believed that they *touched* a Being, *i.e.*, took hold of His feet, if He existed only in their imagination, for the attempt to touch Him would at once have shown them their mistake. Nor could they have seen Him *eat food*, for a subjective vision, like a dream, would not explain the disappearance of the food.<sup>1</sup> Nor could a mere vision take bread and fish, and give it them to eat. Moreover, how are we to account for visionary *conversations*? Is it possible that two persons could have walked several miles, and have honestly believed there was a *Third* walking and talking with them all the way; this Third being due to their own imagination, and yet not recognised till just at the close? In all these cases, then, and many others, the Vision Theory is hopelessly untenable.

Lastly, there is one other great difficulty which is inherent in the Vision Theory, and does not depend on any of our accounts, and this is the fact of the Jews not being able to produce the *dead Body* of Christ. No amount of enthusiasm could go so far as to say that a man's body was restored to life (ate, talked,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 28. 9; Luke 24. 43; John 21. 13; Acts 10. 41.

walked, and was touched), if the corpse was lying before them all the time. So the *presence* or *absence* of the Body seems alike fatal to the theory of subjective visions due to enthusiasm. If it could have been found the Jews would have produced it, rather than invent the story about its being stolen; and if it could not be found, fraud, not enthusiasm, must have made away with it.

With regard to this story, it may be noticed that St. Matthew says it was current among the Jews, and Justin Martyr, himself a native of Palestine, alludes to it as still in circulation in his day; so there can be no doubt that some such story existed.<sup>1</sup> But its weakness is self-evident. For the guard of soldiers could scarcely have seen the disciples come and steal the Body; and if they said that it was stolen *while they slept*, they plainly could not tell whether this was true or whether Christ had come forth of His own accord. Nor is it likely, if the Body was hurriedly stolen, that the *grave-clothes* should have been so carefully left behind.<sup>2</sup>

All, then, that the story proves is this, that though the Body was purposely guarded, yet when it was wanted it was gone, and could not be found. And this is a strong argument not only against the Vision Theory, but against every theory except the Christian one. For when the Resurrection was first announced, the most obvious and decisive answer would have been for the Jews to have produced the dead Body; and their not being able to do so is very corroborative of the

<sup>1</sup> Justin, Dial., 108.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 24. 12; John 20. 7.

Christian account. Indeed the empty Tomb, together with the failure of all attempts to account for it, was doubtless one of the reasons why the Apostles obtained so many converts the first day they preached the Resurrection.<sup>1</sup>

Summing up these arguments, we conclude that the Vision Theory is most improbable in any case, and can only be accepted at all by admitting that nearly the whole of our accounts are not only untrue, but intentionally so. But on such a supposition it is quite needless. Its object was to explain the alleged Resurrection without impugning the *veracity* of the writers, and this it is quite unable to do. In short, if the writers honestly believed the accounts as we have them, or indeed any other accounts at all resembling them, the Vision Theory is out of the question.

It does not even account satisfactorily for the one appearance, that to St. Paul, which it might be thought capable of explaining. Physical blindness does not follow a subjective vision, and to say that in his case the wish was father to the thought, and that his expectation and hope of seeing Christ eventually made him think that he did see Him, is absurd. Here was the case of an avowed enemy and a man of great intellectual power, who was converted solely by the appearance of Christ. And as he had access to all existing evidence on both sides, and had everything to lose and nothing to gain from the change, his conversion alone is a strong argument in favour of Christianity, especially as the fact itself is beyond dispute.

<sup>1</sup> Acts 2. 41.

(D.) THE REASONING OF THE WITNESSES.

Lastly, there is the question of reasoning. Allowing that the alleged appearances were real, did the Apostles draw the right conclusion in thinking that their Master had risen from the dead? The opposite theory is that Christ did not die, but only fainted on the cross, and being taken down, slowly recovered. And in support of this *Swoon Theory*, it is urged that death after crucifixion did not usually ensue so quickly, since we are told that Pilate  *marvelled if He were already dead*; and that He might easily have been mistaken for dead, as no accurate tests were known in those days. Moreover, as He was then placed in a cool rock cave, a return to consciousness would probably ensue, when, of course, He would come forth and visit His friends. And they, superstitious men, looking upon their Master as in some sense divine, and perhaps half expecting the Resurrection, would at once conclude that He had risen from the dead. And being very faint, He would probably ask for something to eat, which is what He did according to St. Luke, and not venture to appear publicly to the Jews. Neither of these two last points, it is urged, is satisfactorily explained on the supposition of a real resurrection of a Divine Christ.

Now with regard to this theory, its credibility must be admitted, since instances are known in which men have actually recovered after crucifixion. And the chief argument in its favour is, of course, the same as that in favour of the Vision Theory. It professes to account for the recorded appearances, without admit-



ting either the truth of the Resurrection, or deliberate falsehood on the part of the witnesses, who, according to this theory, were themselves deceived in thinking that Christ had risen from the dead, when in reality He had never died. They could not therefore have helped in restoring Him to consciousness ; He must have recovered by Himself. This is essential to the theory ; for if, after Christ was taken down and handed over to His friends, they had found that life was not extinct, and by careful tending and nourishing had gradually restored Him, this would indeed account for the appearances in a certain sense ; but only by admitting that the Christians were impostors in saying that He had risen from the dead, well knowing that He had never died, and that all their stories about visits to the tomb were intended to deceive. But if we admit this, no such theory is necessary.

How then would this theory suit the facts of the case ? While admitting its credibility, it is hard to find words to express its great *improbability*. It has immense difficulties, many of them peculiarly its own. And first as to Christ Himself. He must have been extremely exhausted after all the ill-treatment He had received ; indeed, the piercing of His side with a spear would probably of itself have caused death. And yet in this exhausted state He is supposed not only to have recovered consciousness, but to have been able to come out of the sepulchre by Himself, rolling away the large stone. And then He must have walked to Emmaus and back—and this with pierced feet—and have appeared the same evening to His disciples so

completely recovered that they, instead of looking upon Him as still half-dead, imagined that He had conquered death, and was indeed the Prince of Life. All this implies a rapid recovery on the part of Christ, and an amount of credulity on that of the Apostles, which are alike inconceivable.

And it is equally unlikely that so many persons, both friends and foes, should have mistaken Christ for dead. And yet according to this theory the guard entrusted with the execution, the centurion who was sent for by Pilate on purpose to ascertain this very point, the Christians who took down the body and carried it to the sepulchre, and the Jews who asked for a night-guard, must all have honestly believed that Christ was dead when He was not. Moreover, the sepulchre was carefully guarded by His enemies for the express purpose of securing the Body, so as to be able to refute any alleged Resurrection. How then did they let it escape? Of course Christians explain this supernaturally, but the advocates of this theory cannot.

This theory also requires not only that the Apostles should have been deceived in thinking that Christ had risen from the dead, but that Christ Himself should have countenanced the deception, or He would have explained the truth to His disciples. He is thus made to be a deceiver instead of His Apostles, which all will admit to be most improbable. And yet the only other alternative is even more so, which is that Christ was Himself mistaken in thinking that He had really died, when He had not.

Moreover, what became of Christ afterwards? He

must have died again at some time, and His real tomb is sure to have been much venerated by His followers ; and it is difficult to believe that no tradition of it should have remained, sufficient at all events to prevent the belief in the Ascension.

But perhaps the chief argument against this theory is that it does not account for many of the actual facts recorded ; such as Christ passing through closed doors and vanishing at pleasure, as well as His Ascension. These details present no difficulty on the Vision Theory, nor on that of deliberate falsehood, but they are inconsistent with the present one. Our conclusion, then, in regard to this *Swoon Theory* is precisely the same as that in regard to the Vision Theory, though for different reasons. It is that the theory is very improbable in any case, and only tenable at all by supposing a large part of our present narratives to be intentionally untrue. But then such a theory is quite needless.

(E.) CONCLUSION.

Before concluding this chapter a few remarks may be made on the alleged difficulties of the *Christian* theory. There is only one of any consequence, which is the philosophical one of how such a miracle as the Resurrection could occur at all. But admitting this (see Chapter XIII.), the others are mostly unimportant. That a divine Christ, who was pleased to reassume His human body, should be able to roll away the stone from the sepulchre and to overcome the guard, presents no difficulty ; nor that He should appear and disappear at pleasure in such a form as to be recognised or not as

He wished. And His asking for something to eat was obviously to satisfy His disciples of the reality of His risen Body, and thus disprove the Vision Theory, which they were rather inclined to adopt.

There is, however, still one objection which may be thought worth notice. It is Christ's not appearing *publicly* to the Jews. Why, it is asked, did Christ only appear to believers? Surely this is very suspicious. If He really did rise from the dead, and wished the world to believe it, why did He not settle the point by publicly going into Jerusalem? He would thus not only have completely triumphed over His enemies, but would have saved his followers many sufferings. The answer to this objection is three-fold.

In the first place, the wording is somewhat ambiguous and misleading. It is of course admitted that Christ only appeared to those who had been His friends before His death (except St. Paul), and not to His enemies, or even to indifferent persons. But as to the fact of His Resurrection, those to whom He appeared were not believers: it was only His repeated appearances that made them so. And every person to whom Christ appeared, no matter how unwilling he was to admit the Resurrection (*e.g.*, St. Thomas), was eventually compelled to do so, simply because the evidence was, or at all events seemed to him to be, overwhelming.

Secondly, it is at least open to doubt whether it would have *settled the point* if Christ had gone publicly into Jerusalem. No doubt the Jews who saw Him would have been convinced by it, but the nation as a whole might, or might not, have embraced Christianity.

If they did *not*, which is the more probable on the Christian view, since they had already rejected many other miracles, the evidence in favour of the Resurrection would have been weakened enormously. A public entry into Jerusalem which did not convince the nation, but which, for example, they ascribed to a pretender, would have been worse than useless evidentially.

If, on the other hand, the Jewish nation had embraced Christianity, it is still doubtful whether the evidence would have been stronger than it is at present. No doubt the early Christians would have been saved many sufferings; but for this very reason their evidence would be *less* valuable, for we should have no satisfactory proof of their veracity. Moreover, it would have weakened the force of *Prophecy* enormously, since, in the absence of ancient manuscripts, the assertion that the old Jewish prophecies had been tampered with, to make them suit their Christian interpretation, would be difficult to disprove. But now these prophecies have been preserved by hostile librarians, and are thus beyond suspicion. It is hence very doubtful whether Christ's going publicly into Jerusalem would have strengthened the total evidence in favour of Christianity.

But thirdly, even admitting that it would, what then? Can we say that it ought to have taken place, or that its not doing so renders the alleged Resurrection improbable? Certainly not; for the evidence in favour of the Resurrection is already amply sufficient to justify anyone in believing it. And if so, the

absence of still stronger evidence is no reason for disregarding what we have. This objection then cannot be maintained.

In conclusion, it seems scarcely necessary to sum up the arguments in this chapter. Suffice it to say we have discussed at some length the veracity, knowledge, investigation, and reasoning of the first witnesses of the Resurrection, and not one of these points can be fairly doubted. In fact the evidence in favour of each is overwhelming. And yet, as before shown, unless we dispute one of these points, we are bound to admit that the Resurrection was true.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THAT THE OTHER NEW TESTAMENT MIRACLES ARE PROBABLY TRUE.

#### (A.) THEIR CREDIBILITY.

They are similar to those in the Old Testament ; except the casting out of Evil Spirits, which, however, presents no great difficulty.

#### (B.) THEIR ALLEGED PUBLICITY.

- (1.) They are said to have occurred in public.
- (2.) They were publicly appealed to.
- (3.) And were never disputed at the time, either by Jews or heathen.
- (4.) While all attempts to explain them away are hopelessly untenable.

#### (C.) THE SUBJECT OF LATER MIRACLES.

The objections from their alleged continuance and non-continuance cannot be maintained. Conclusion.

#### (A.) THEIR CREDIBILITY.

HAVING discussed in the last chapter the Resurrection of Christ, we pass on now to the other New Testament miracles, though it will not be necessary to examine them at length. With one exception, they are similar to those in the Old Testament, only, as a rule, they present less difficulties. Most of them, especially the miracles of healing, were very suitable from a moral point of view, while that they were asserted to be

evidential of Christ's mission is beyond dispute. Not only do the Evangelists assert this, but Christ Himself, though He refused to work a miracle when challenged to do so, yet appealed to His *public* miracles in the most emphatic manner. Thus, when the Baptist sent messengers to inquire whether He was the Messiah, His only answer was, 'Go your way, and tell John the things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up,' etc.<sup>1</sup>

The exception above alluded to refers to the *casting out of evil spirits*, which has no parallel in the Old Testament. And as the whole subject of the existence and influence of spirits or angels is often thought to present great difficulties, we will briefly examine it. And first, as to the *existence* of angels. There is no difficulty here. For the whole analogy of nature would teach us that as there are numerous beings in the scale of life below man, so there would be some beings above man—that is to say, between him and the Supreme Being. And this is rendered still more probable when we reflect on the small gaps there are in the descending scale, and the enormous gap there would be in the ascending scale if man were the next highest being in the universe to God.

And that these higher beings, or some of them, should be entirely *spiritual*, *i.e.*, without material bodies, and therefore beyond scientific discovery, is not improbable. Indeed, considering that man's superiority to lower beings lies in the fact of his having a semi-spiritual nature, the idea that higher beings may be entirely

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 11: 4; Luke 7. 22; see also Mark 2. 10.



spiritual is even probable, while it is easier in some respects to believe in a purely spiritual being, than in one who is partly spiritual and partly material. And that these angels should have as great, if not greater, intellectual and moral faculties than man seems certain ; otherwise they would not be higher beings at all. And this necessitates their having *free will*, with the option of choosing good or evil. And that, like men, some should choose one, and some the other, seems equally probable. Hence the existence of both good and evil angels presents no difficulty.

Secondly, as to the *influence* of angels. Now that good angels should wish to influence men for good, and might occasionally be employed by God for that purpose, scarcely seems improbable. And on the other hand, that evil angels should wish to act, as evil men act, in tempting others to do wrong, is only what we should expect. And that they should be able to do this is quite credible ; for the whole analogy of nature shows that higher beings are always able to influence lower ones. While that God should allow them to do so is no harder to believe than that He should allow evil men to do the same. There is thus no difficulty on *primâ facie* grounds as to what is called demoniacal temptation.

But it may still be objected that we have no actual *evidence* of the influence of angels at the present day. But this is at least open to doubt. For what evidence could we expect to have ? We could not expect to have any physical sensation, or anything capable of scientific investigation, for angels are by hypothesis

spiritual beings. If, then, they were to influence man, say, by tempting him to do evil, all we could know would be the sudden presence of some wicked or evil thought in our minds, without, as far as we could judge, any previous cause for it. And who will assert that such a phenomenon is unknown, or that, if known, it does not constitute all the proof we could expect of the action of an evil spirit ?

Next as to demoniacal *possession*. Though our ignorance on the subject is great, there is nothing incredible here. Indeed, the phenomena of mesmerism at the present day, though they cannot always be trusted, seem to show that even one man may so entirely possess the mind and will of another as to make him do whatever he wishes. And it is certainly not more difficult to believe that this power may in certain cases be exercised by an evil spirit. With regard to the outward symptoms mentioned in the Gospels, they appear to have resembled certain forms of madness, instances of which still occur ; though, as the patients are now kept under restraint in civilised countries, they have not the same notoriety. But it may be said, why ascribe this madness to an evil spirit ? But why not ? Madness often follows the frequent yielding to certain temptations, such as drunkenness or impurity ; and that it may really be due to the action of an evil spirit, and be the appropriate punishment for yielding to his temptation, is certainly not incredible. And if so, considering the grossly immoral state of the world at the Christian era, we cannot be surprised at such cases being far more common then than now. While lastly,

the *cure* of demoniacal possession presents as a miracle no difficulty whatever.

There is, however, an undoubted difficulty in regard to *animals* being thus affected. But as we have only a single example of this, the swine at Gadara, it is little more than a *one-text* difficulty.<sup>1</sup> Still it is a difficulty, and I have never met with a satisfactory explanation of it ; though our ignorance about animals, combined with the fact that they resemble man in so many respects, prevents us from asserting that it is absolutely incredible.

Two other difficulties in regard to this miracle may be noticed in passing. The first is on the ground of injustice, as Christ allowed the swine to be destroyed, without apparently making any compensation to the owners. But if He were really the Divine Being He claimed to be, the world and all it contained belonged to Him ; and His allowing the swine to be destroyed by evil spirits was no more unjust than His allowing them to die by disease or in any other manner.

The second objection refers to the swine being kept at all, considering the abhorrence in which they were held by the Jews. But we happen to know from Josephus that Gadara was one of the few Grecian cities in the country ; so this is really an evidence of truthfulness.<sup>2</sup> For if the Evangelist had invented the story it is most unlikely that he should have *unknowingly* selected a Grecian city for the miracle ; and still more unlikely that he should have done so

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 8. 28-34 ; Mark 5. 1-17 ; Luke 8. 26-40.

<sup>2</sup> Antiq., xvii. 11.

*knowingly*, and yet without giving a hint that this explained the presence of the swine, but leaving his readers to discover it for themselves. Lastly, we must remember that all the Christian miracles lose a great deal of their improbability when we remember the *unique position of Christ*. And what would be incredible, if told of another man, who had done nothing to alter the history of the world, may be credible of *Him*. We decide, then, that all the New Testament miracles are credible.

(B.) THEIR ALLEGED PUBLICITY.

Now the testimony in favour of these miracles is very similar to that in favour of the Resurrection of Christ. They are recorded by the same writers and in the same Gospels, and everything points to these accounts being trustworthy. To put it shortly, the writers had no motive for recording the miracles unless they believed them to be true, and they had ample means of finding out whether they were true or not; while many of them are such as cannot possibly be explained by want of investigation or an error in reasoning. They are also closely interwoven with the ordinary history and the moral teaching of Christ, and it is difficult either to separate them or to believe the whole account to be fictitious. His wonderful works and His wonderful teaching involve each other, and form an harmonious whole, which is too life-like to be imaginary. Indeed, a life of Christ without His miracles would be as unintelligible as a life of Napoleon without his campaigns. And it is interesting to note in this connection that St. Mark's

Gospel, which is generally admitted to be the earliest of the Synoptics, contains the largest proportion of miracles (eighteen miracles to four parables). As we should expect, it was Christ's miracles, rather than His teaching, which first attracted attention.

Moreover several of the miracles have strong marks of genuineness.<sup>1</sup> Take, for instance, the raising of the daughter of Jairus. Now of course any writer, wishing to magnify the power of Christ, might have invented this or any other miracle. But if so, it is most improbable that he should have put into the mouth of Christ the words, *The child is not dead but sleepeth*. These words seem to imply that Christ Himself did not consider it a miracle, and whatever difficulties they present they certainly bear the marks of genuineness. And the same may be said of the miracle of healing the blind man at Bethsaida, which is recorded as if it was a partial failure at first. Christians in later times would scarcely have invented such a miracle as this to ascribe to their Master.

And then there is the striking passage where Christ announced that all believers would be able to work miracles.<sup>2</sup> If He said so, He must surely have been able to work them Himself; and if He did not say so, His followers must have been able to work them, or their inventing such a promise would merely have shown that they were not believers.

Again, and this is very remarkable, the Evangelists nearly always relate that Christ performed His miracles by *His own authority*; whereas the Old Testament

<sup>1</sup> Mark 5. 39; 8. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 16. 17.

prophets, with scarcely an exception, performed theirs by calling upon God. Take for instance the parallel cases of raising a widow's son.<sup>1</sup> Elijah prays earnestly that God would restore the child to life; Christ merely gives the command, *I say unto thee, Arise*. The difference between the two is very striking, and is of itself a strong argument in favour of Christ's miracles; for had the Evangelists invented them, it is scarcely conceivable that they should not have modelled them on those of the Old Testament. But instead of this, they describe them as performed in a new and unprecedented manner, and one which must at the time have seemed most presumptuous. (Compare the way in which the prophets taught, *Thus saith the Lord*, with that of Christ, *Verily I say unto you*.)

It should also be noticed that in one respect the testimony in favour of these miracles is even stronger than that in favour of the Resurrection, and this is from their alleged *publicity*. And as this is a most important point, we must examine it in detail.

(1.) *They are said to have occurred in public.*

To begin with, many of the miracles are stated to have been performed openly and before crowds of persons; and hence, if untrue, they could have been easily refuted. Take for instance the feeding of the five thousand. This miracle is recorded in each of the Four Gospels; it forms part of the so-called Triple Tradition, and must therefore have been written down very soon after the event, when a large number of the five thousand were still alive. Now is it conceivable

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 17. 21; Luke 7. 14.

that anyone would have ventured to make up such an account, even twenty years afterwards, if nothing of the kind had taken place? And if he had done so, would not his story have been instantly refuted? And of course the same argument applies in other cases. Indeed, it is hard to overestimate the enormous difficulty of asserting *public* miracles if none occurred; and yet the early Christians asserted such miracles from the very first.

(2.) *They were publicly appealed to.*

Moreover, not only were these public miracles recorded in the first Gospels, but they were publicly appealed to by the first preachers of Christianity. According to the *Acts*, they are confidently appealed to in the very first public sermon, that at Pentecost by St. Peter, as well as in one other speech at least.<sup>1</sup> That they are not more frequently alluded to is not surprising when we remember that, according to the writer—and he was an eye-witness in some cases<sup>2</sup>—the Apostles themselves performed miracles, and therefore there was no occasion for them to appeal to those of Christ as proving the truth of what they preached. Their own miracles were quite sufficient to convince anyone who was open to this kind of proof. But still the important fact remains that in the first recorded Christian sermon the public miracles of Christ are publicly appealed to; and this was within a few months of their occurrence, and at Jerusalem, where the statement, if untrue, could have been more easily refuted than anywhere else.

<sup>1</sup> Acts 2. 22; 10. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 16. 16-18; 28. 2-10.

Passing on to the *Epistles*; it is true they do not contain many references to Christ's miracles, except of course the Resurrection. But this was only natural, as they were not written to convert heathen, but to instruct those who were already Christians. On the other hand, they do contain direct reference to *Apostolic* miracles. St. Paul in two of his undisputed Epistles positively asserts that he had worked miracles himself; and he uses the same three words, *signs*, *wonders*, and *mighty works*, which are used in the Gospels to describe the miracles of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

The second passage is extremely important, since he speaks of them as the *signs of an apostle*, and calls upon his opponents at Corinth to admit that he was an apostle *because* he had wrought these miracles; and this implies not only that the miracles were publicly performed, but that his readers as well as himself believed that the power of working miracles belonged to all the Apostles.

And it will be noticed that he is addressing the very persons among whom he declares the miracles had been wrought; which makes it almost inconceivable that his claim was unfounded, quite apart from the difficulty of believing that such a man as St. Paul would wilfully make a false statement. From all this it follows that the first preachers of Christianity not only appealed to Christ's miracles, but also to their own, in support of their claims. And, as just said, how they could have done this, if they performed no miracles, is not easy to understand.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 15. 18, 19; 2 Cor. 12. 12; see also Gal. 3. 5.



We next come to a class of writings where we should expect to find Christ's miracles alluded to, and these are the first Christian *Apologies*. Nor are we disappointed. The three earliest of these, of which we have any knowledge, were written by Quadratus, Aristides, and Justin. *Quadratus* addressed his Apology to the Emperor Hadrian (117-138 A.D.), and in a passage preserved by Eusebius he says, 'The works of our Saviour were always conspicuous, for they were real; both they that were healed and they that were raised from the dead were seen, not only when they were healed or raised, but for a long time afterwards; not only whilst He dwelt on this earth, but also after His departure, and for a good while after it, inasmuch as that some of them have reached to our times.'<sup>1</sup>

*Aristides* of Athens wrote about the same time (125 A.D.), and his Apology has recently been re-discovered. He bases his defence of Christianity on its moral character; and as it was often attacked for being immoral as well as irrational, there is nothing surprising in this. But though he does not appeal to any public miracles, yet in a brief outline of Christian doctrine he asserts the Divinity, Incarnation, Virgin-birth, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ.

Lastly, *Justin* in his Apology to the Emperor Antoninus (138-161 A.D.) not only specifies many of Christ's miracles, but also says generally that Christ 'healed those who were maimed, and deaf, and lame in body from their birth, causing them to leap, to hear, and to see by His word. And having raised the dead,

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, Hist., iv. 3.

and causing them to live, by His deeds He compelled the men who lived at that time to recognise Him. But though they saw such works, they asserted it was magical art. For they dared to call Him a magician and a deceiver of the people.<sup>1</sup> Justin, however, does not base his argument on miracles, but chiefly on prophecy, because as he tells us again, the former might be ascribed to magical arts. Thus two out of the three earliest apologists appealed to Christ's miracles in the most public manner possible when addressing the Emperor.

(3.) *They were never disputed at the time.*

But now comes another important point. Though these public miracles were publicly appealed to by the early Christians, and though written accounts of them were in circulation very soon after they are alleged to have occurred, yet, as far as we know, no refuting evidence was produced, certainly none has been preserved. And this is the more remarkable since they are said to have been performed among enemies as well as friends. They were thus open to the hostile criticism of an entire nation; and yet, as far as we know, they were never disputed. On the contrary, judging by the only evidence we have, they seem to have been admitted both by Jews and heathen; though, of course, they both denied their evidential value.

The *Jews* did this by ascribing them to *diabolical agency*. And though this was a very strange expedient, considering that their effect was obviously good and

<sup>1</sup> Dial., 69; Apol. I. 30.

not evil, they had really no alternative. Being Monotheists, if they denied that they were wrought by God, they were bound to ascribe them to the Devil, for these were the only supernatural powers they believed in ; though of course each of these had subordinate angels under them. But we may ask, would the Jews have adopted such an expedient had there been any possibility of denying their occurrence ? And yet that they did adopt it can scarcely be disputed. It is positively asserted in each of the Synoptic Gospels ;<sup>1</sup> and it is scarcely conceivable that Christians should have reported such a horrible insinuation as that their Master was an agent of the Evil One, unless it had been made. From this it follows that the Jews admitted the Christian miracles, but denied their evidential value by adopting the violent, though in their case only possible, alternative of ascribing them to the Devil.

But why, it may be asked, if the Jews admitted Christ's miracles, did they not acknowledge His claims ? The answer is very instructive. The Jews as a nation no doubt admitted His miracles, and were in consequence quite willing to acknowledge Him as the Messiah. The multitude, we read, wished to make Him a king by force, escorted Him triumphantly into Jerusalem, and were so attached to His cause that the authorities were afraid to arrest Him openly. But, as we shall see in Chapter XX., He claimed to be far more than the Jewish Messiah : He claimed to be *God*. Now, as just said, the Jews were firmly de-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 12. 24 ; Mark 3. 22 ; Luke 11. 15.

voted to Monotheism ; anyone, therefore, who claimed to be God was of necessity in their eyes a blasphemer. And the chief priests, knowing this, not only accused Christ of blasphemy, but actually got Him to assert His Divine claims on His trial. This at once detached the multitude from His side ; and though only a few days before they hailed Him as the Son of David, they now with perfect consistency demanded His death. However much they were convinced of His miracles, they were still more convinced of Monotheism. And therefore, if a man who performed miracles asserted that he was God, they could only ascribe them to the Devil.

On the other hand, the *Heathen* were in no such dilemma. They believed in a variety of gods, many of whom were favourable to mankind, and could be invoked by *magic*. And therefore they could consistently ascribe the miracles to some of these lesser deities, or, in popular language, to magic. And we have abundant evidence that they did so. As we have seen, it is expressly asserted by Justin, who in consequence preferred the argument from prophecy ; and Irenæus did the same, and for avowedly the same reason.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, *Celsus*, the most important opponent of Christianity in the second century, also adopted this view. His works are now lost, but Origen in answering him frequently and positively asserts it. For instance, 'Celsus, moreover, unable to resist the miracles which Jesus is reported to have performed, has already on

<sup>1</sup> Bk. ii. 32.

several occasions spoken of them slanderously as works of sorcery.' And elsewhere he quotes the explanation of Celsus, which was that Jesus, 'having been brought up as an illegitimate child, and having served for hire in Egypt, and then coming to the knowledge of certain miraculous powers, returned from thence to his own country, and by means of those powers proclaimed himself a God.'<sup>1</sup>

Now, though Celsus lived some years after the time in question, it is scarcely conceivable that, if the early opponents of Christianity had denied that the miracles occurred, its later opponents should have given up this strong line of defence, and have adopted the far weaker one that they did occur but were due to magic. Moreover the Jewish Talmud also asserts that Christ's miracles were due to the magic which He learnt in Egypt, so there can be no doubt that this was a common explanation of them, and therefore the fact that He worked miracles must have been commonly admitted.<sup>2</sup>

We must next notice a well-known, though perhaps spurious, passage in *Josephus*, which describes Christ as a 'wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works.' It then alludes to His alleged Resurrection, and ends with the curious remark, 'The tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.'<sup>3</sup> The *wonderful works* here referred to were evidently superhuman, *i.e.*,

<sup>1</sup> Origen cont. Cels., i. 38 ; ii. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Edersheim's *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 1901, vol. ii., p. 772, gives a reference to the Tractate Shabbath, p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> Antiq., xviii. 3.

miraculous, since it was in consequence of these that the writer doubted whether it were lawful to call Him a Man. And though the authenticity of the passage has been much disputed, it matters little for our present purpose. For no Christian would have described his religion as a sect not yet extinct. So if not the words of Josephus, they must be the addition of a Jewish or Roman editor ; but this is equally good evidence that the non-Christians living at the time did not deny that the miracles actually occurred.

Now the above passages show beyond doubt that it was possible for men in those days to admit that Christ wrought miracles without becoming Christians, saying they were due either to the Devil or to magic. Such attempts at getting out of the difficulty are now universally condemned, and anyone who admits the miracles admits the religion they were meant to attest.

The only argument on the other side is from the *silence* of classical writers. Had the miracles really occurred, it is said, especially in such a well-known place as Palestine, the writers of the day would have been full of them. But, with the single exception of Tacitus, they do not even allude to Christianity, and he dismisses it with contempt as a *pernicious superstition*.<sup>1</sup> Now these words of Tacitus show that he had never studied the subject, for whatever may be said against the religion, it certainly was not pernicious ; so that he must have rejected Christianity *without examination*. And if the other classical writers did the same, there is nothing remarkable in their not

<sup>1</sup> Tac. Annals, Bk. xv., ch. 44.

alluding to it. If, on the other hand, they rejected it *after* examination—if, that is, they considered its alleged miracles, and were not convinced by them—it is probable that they would have noticed it. What then the objection amounts to is that the writers in question did not think the Christian miracles worth inquiring about. And this is doubtless true, for alleged miracles were common enough in those days ; but we have not a single instance of a writer who did inquire about them, and was not convinced of their truth. And though the fact of alleged miracles being then so common is often appealed to as discrediting those of Christ, it really does nothing of the kind. It merely makes us examine the evidence for them more carefully. For if miracles are not only (as shown in Chapter VII.) the most suitable signs to attest a Revelation, but were *especially* suitable at that time, as they were just the sort of signs which were then required and expected (and in consequence often invented by impostors), is there anything surprising in Christ's giving such signs ? Is it not rather what we should expect, in the same way that to convince a foreigner one would use the language he understood best ?

It should also be noticed that in some respects the testimony of Christian writers (*e.g.*, St. Paul or St. Luke) is more valuable than that of Jewish or heathen ones ; for none of the writers of that century were born Christians. They were all unbelievers before they were believers ; and if such testimony from unbelievers would be valuable, it is still more so from those who

showed how thoroughly they were convinced of its truth by becoming believers. While, lastly, it must be remembered that the argument from silence is proverbially unsound. For instance, we have over two hundred and forty letters of the younger Pliny, and in only one of these does he mention Christianity. Suppose this one had been lost, what a strong argument could have been formed against the spread of Christianity from the silence of Pliny, and yet this one shows its marvellous progress (see Chapter XXI.).

This objection, then, is quite insufficient to outweigh the positive testimony on the other side, and we are forced back to the conclusion that the actual occurrence of the Christian miracles was *never disputed* at the time, either by Jews or heathen. And considering their alleged publicity, this is a strong additional argument in their favour.

(4.) *Futile attempts to explain them away.*

We must next notice certain Rationalistic explanations which have been given of the miracles. It was hardly to be expected that, with such strong evidence in their favour, the modern opponents of Christianity would merely assert that the accounts were pure fiction from beginning to end. Attempts have of course been made to explain the miracles in such a way that, while depriving them of any supernatural character, it may yet be admitted that some such events occurred which gave rise to the Christian stories. For instance, Christ's walking on the sea is explained as His walking on a ridge of sand or rock running out just under the water; the raising of



Lazarus as his having been buried alive ; and feeding the five thousand as nothing more than the example of Christ and His Apostles, who so freely shared their small supply with those around them that it induced others to do the same, and thus eventually everyone had a little. These explanations, it will be noticed, correspond to denying the investigation or reasoning of the witnesses, and frequently their veracity as well, and if so, what need is there of any explanation at all ?

We will now consider a single example in detail, and select the *raising of Lazarus*. And if we take the explanation of this offered by *Rénan*, we shall probably have before us the best non-miraculous account that can be given of it.<sup>1</sup> *Rénan*, then, admits that something which was at the time regarded as a miracle occurred at Bethany ; but he explains it thus. Christ's friends, he says, were very anxious that He should perform some striking miracle, or what seemed to be such, for the sake of impressing the multitude. And he then proceeds, ' Perhaps Lazarus, still pale from his sickness, caused himself to be swathed in grave-clothes, as one dead, and shut up in his family tomb,' etc. In other words, Lazarus had himself buried alive, and then, when Christ was summoned and the stone rolled away, he of course came forth ; and the crowd at once believed that he had risen from the dead.

Now in discussing this theory it seems hard to find words to express its great improbability. Is it likely that the simple household at Bethany should ever have thought of such an elaborate fraud ? If they

<sup>1</sup> *Rénan's Life of Jesus*, pp. 304, 305.

believed Christ capable of performing a real miracle, what need was there for a sham one? and if they did not believe it, why did they wish other people to believe it? Again, is it likely that Lazarus should have consented to sham being dead, especially when recovering from a real illness? Once more, is it likely that the fraud could have been carried out successfully at the time, and that the truth should never have leaked out afterwards, especially as the event was much talked about, and led to Christ's being apprehended?<sup>1</sup> And above all, is it likely that Christ Himself should have countenanced such a monstrous imposture?

Such a theory, then, would require the very strongest evidence to support it; but there is no evidence at all, either strong or weak. The most that can be said for it is that, according to Rénan, it is the best way of accounting for the story in our Gospel, assuming a real miracle to be out of the question. And the fact that he considers even this extraordinary theory *more* likely than that the whole story should be fiction, shows what overwhelming evidence there is in favour of our Gospel history.

Lastly, it must be remembered that the Christian explanation has but *one* difficulty, the antecedent or philosophical one, for all the miracles. Once admit this, and twenty miracles are no more difficult to believe than two. On the other hand, the difficulties of the Rationalistic explanations are all *cumulative*. If, for instance, the raising of Lazarus is explained by

<sup>1</sup> John 11. 53; 12. 9.

his having been buried alive, it does not account for Christ walking on the sea. If this is explained by there being a ridge of sand running out under the water, it does not account for feeding the five thousand, and so on indefinitely. In short, the difficulties attending such explanations are not only great for each individual miracle, but are all cumulative; and therefore when taken together they are quite insuperable.

(C.) THE SUBJECT OF LATER MIRACLES.

We have finally to consider two objections from the subject of later miracles. The first is from their alleged *continuance*. The Christian miracles, it is said, form an unbroken series, beginning at the time of Christ, and lasting all through the Middle Ages. And therefore as the later ones are certainly spurious, it discredits the whole series. But there is little to show that the later miracles form one series with those in the New Testament, and much to show that they do not. For, as a rule, their object was different; not being to convince unbelievers, or to attest a Divine revelation, but merely for the benefit of persons who were already Christians. Each case must of course be judged separately on its merits; but even supposing, for the sake of argument, that they were all spurious, it would not tell against the New Testament ones, any more than imitation diamonds would tell against the existence of real diamonds.

The other and more important objection is from their alleged *non-continuance*. Why, it is said, are there no miracles *now*, when they could be properly tested? If they were really employed by God as

helps to the spread of His religion, why should they not have accompanied it all along, as it is said they did the Jewish religion? They are surely wanted for the support of Christianity at the present day; and if God were to work a public miracle every half-century, all the other evidences of Christianity might be dispensed with.

The answer to this objection is that the Christian revelation does not claim to be an intermittent one like the Jewish, but a final and complete revelation, made once for all by Christ and His disciples; and that therefore, as there is to be no fresh revelation, there cannot be any fresh miracles to attest it.

Of course, it may be replied that God might still work a miracle now by a man, who stated that it was not to authenticate anything fresh which he said himself, but merely to confirm what the Founder of Christianity had said. No doubt this is possible, but we have not in the whole Bible a single instance of such a miracle, *i.e.*, a miracle not to authenticate some new message from God, but one that had been delivered centuries before. On the contrary, according to the Bible, a messenger from God always brings his own credentials, even though, as in the case of a prediction, they may not be verified till afterwards. And what reason have we for thinking that God would change His method now?

Moreover the method is a most natural one. When the Revelation was first given, *i.e.*, when Christianity was first preached, the Church was weak, and had to fight its way in a hostile world, so it had the occasional

assistance of miracles. When it became strong, they were no longer necessary, and no longer occurred. They had already done all that was required. Their object was to establish the truth of Christianity, and this is precisely what they did. The evidence they afforded was so powerful that a hostile world found it irresistible. And it is to say the least extremely doubtful whether, if God were to perform a miracle now, it would convince everybody.

Both these objections then must be put aside, and we conclude, on reviewing the whole chapter, that the New Testament miracles are not only credible, but that there is extremely strong evidence in their favour. In particular, their alleged *publicity*, combined with the utter absence of any attempt at disproving them, form together a very powerful argument. And it is doubtful whether any other religion, except, of course, the Jewish, has ever claimed to have been attested by public evidential miracles. Christianity thus rests upon a unique foundation. Unlike other religions, it appealed at first not to abstract reasoning, or moral consciousness, or physical force, but to miraculous events, of the truth or falsehood of which others could judge. They did judge and they were convinced. We decide then that the New Testament miracles are probably true.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THAT THE JEWISH PROPHECIES CONFIRM THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

#### (A.) PROPHECIES.

The Jewish prophets foretold a reigning, a suffering, and a Divine Messiah ; and these apparently conflicting ideas are all fulfilled in Christ.

#### (B.) PREDICTIONS.

List of four important groups ; one examined in detail.

(1.) Isaiah's account of Christ's death. The historical agreement and the doctrinal agreement are both very striking ; great improbability of this being due to chance.

(2.) Various objections ; none of much importance.

#### (C.) CONCLUSION.

Other marks of connection between the Jewish and Christian Religions ; the cumulative nature of the evidence.

WE propose to consider in this chapter the argument from *Prophecy*. Now it is a remarkable and undisputed fact that for many centuries before the Christian era the Jews expected a Messiah, Who should give a further revelation from God ; and the Old Testament contains numerous prophecies referring to Him, which Christians assert were actually fulfilled in Christ. This argument is plainly of the utmost importance, and must therefore

be discussed at some length. Fortunately it is much simplified for two reasons. The first is that the question of dates is altogether excluded. As a rule, the most important point to decide in an alleged prophecy is that it was written before its fulfilment. But here this is undisputed, since everyone admits that the whole of the Old Testament was written before the time of Christ. The second is, that the writings have been preserved by the Jews themselves, who, being adverse to the claims of Christianity, are hostile librarians, so we may be sure that not a single alteration in favour of Christianity has crept in, though we cannot, of course, be equally sure the other way.

Now we will divide the evidence to be considered into the two classes of *prophecies* and *predictions*. By the former are meant, as explained in Chapter XI., any general foreshadowings of future events, which are indefinite; while by the latter are meant distinct statements of future events, which are definite.

#### (A.) PROPHECIES.

To begin with, it is foretold, from the earliest times, that one of the Jewish nation should be a blessing to *all mankind*. This promise is recorded as having been made both to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob;<sup>1</sup> and as a matter of fact, Christianity was founded by a Jew, and has undoubtedly been a blessing to the human race. This is at least a remarkable coincidence; and it is to be noticed that, as we proceed in the Old Testament, the statements about this future Messiah gradually

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 22. 18; 26. 4; 28. 14.

become clearer and fuller, till at last in the Prophets we find whole chapters referring to Him.

The passages which might be examined are thus very numerous, but the argument to be deduced from them is very simple. It is briefly this : that the expected Messiah of the Jews was precisely such a person as the Christ of the Gospels is represented to be ; and this is the more remarkable because there are three different, and to some extent contradictory, elements in His character. He was not only a great spiritual *Sovereign*, who founded the most powerful religion the world has ever seen, and has reigned over millions of men with the most absolute authority ; but He was also a great *sufferer*, living a life of sorrow, and dying a death of shame. And still more remarkable, He claimed (as we shall see in the next chapter) to be not only human but *divine* ; and yet these apparently diverse elements are all foreshadowed in the Old Testament, and often with the utmost clearness. We will therefore consider the Jewish prophecies under the three heads of a reigning, a suffering, and a Divine Messiah.

And first as to a *Reigning Messiah*. Little need be said here, for that the Messiah expected by the Jews was to be a sovereign, who should in some sense restore the glory of Israel, is too plain to need quotations. Allusions to this reigning Messiah occur in numerous passages ;<sup>1</sup> and it is important to notice that several of them state that His kingdom was to be not only over the Jews, but over the *Gentiles* also. It was to be a

<sup>1</sup> E.g., Isa. 2. 2-4 ; 9. 6, 7 ; 11. 1-10 ; 42. 1-7 ; 49. 6, 7 . 51. 4 ; Dan. 7. 13, 14 ; Mal. 4.



kind of universal empire very similar to what the Christian Church has actually been. And that such a kingdom should have been foretold at all, especially by Jews with their rigid exclusiveness, is very remarkable. Moreover, in some places it is implied that the Messiah's reign was not to be like that of an ordinary ruler, but rather of a *religious* character. For such expressions as the *Law* going forth from Sion, and the *Word of the Lord* from Jerusalem, can only refer to some religious doctrine. And here again the authority of Christ over His followers, and His world-wide religion emanating from Judæa, exactly suit the prophecies.

On the other hand, it must be remembered that the prophets speak of the universality of the Messiah's kingdom, and of the rest and peace He was to bring, in a way which has not been completely fulfilled by the Christian Church. But this does not destroy the striking agreement in other places. A man's portrait may be defective in some respects, and yet we may have no doubt that it is his portrait. In the same way, the prophecies as to the reigning Messiah and His Universal Church may seem obscure, or inapplicable in some details; and yet we may have no doubt that they refer to the events in question.

Next as to a *Suffering Messiah*. As was natural, this idea was not nearly so prominent in the Old Testament as that of a reigning Messiah; but it is found in several remarkable passages. To begin with, some of those which describe His triumphs describe His sufferings also, and often linked together in such a way as to make it impossible to refer them to different

persons. For example, to quote one of the previous passages, 'It is too light a thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel : I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers : Kings shall see and arise ; princes, and they shall worship.'

And a few chapters further on (53) Isaiah describes in detail the sufferings of this same *Servant of God*, who can therefore be none other than the future Messiah. And he distinctly refers to His violent death, which is also foretold by Daniel and Zechariah (see later on).

Lastly, as to a *Divine Messiah*. This is more remarkable than either of the others, when we consider the strong Monotheism of the Jews. And yet there exist in the Old Testament certain passages which, taken in their plain literal meaning, state or imply that the future Messiah was to be not only Super-human, but Divine. The following are three of the most important :—

'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ; and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'<sup>1</sup> Here we have a plain statement of the Divinity of One Who should be born a child. The two words translated

<sup>1</sup> Isa. 9. 6 ; 10. 21.

*Mighty God* are incapable of any other translation; and no other is suggested for them in the margin of either the Authorised or Revised Version. And the same two words occur in the next chapter, where they plainly mean *Mighty God* and nothing else. And it should be noticed the term *Everlasting Father* is literally *Father of Eternity* (see margin) and means the Eternal One. (Compare such names as Abihail<sup>1</sup> or *Father of Strength*, meaning the Strong One.) This is another divine attribute, and does not conflict with the Christian doctrine that it was the Son, and not the Father, Who became Incarnate.

‘But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.’<sup>2</sup> Here we have a prophecy of the birth of One who had existed *from everlasting*; thus teaching the Pre-existence and apparent Divinity of the Messiah, who was to be born at Bethlehem, where, as a matter of fact, Christ actually was born.

‘Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.’<sup>3</sup> The word translated *fellow* is only found elsewhere in Leviticus, where it is used eleven times, and is usually translated *neighbour*, and always implies an equality between the two persons.<sup>4</sup> Thus God speaks of the Shepherd who was to be slain with the sword (a term

<sup>1</sup> Num. 3. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Mic. 5. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Zech. 13. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Lev. 0. 2; 18. 20; 19. 11, 15, 17; 24. 19; 25. 14, 15, 17.

used for any violent death),<sup>1</sup> as equal with Himself, and yet at the same time Man; and, therefore, no one but a Messiah who is both God and Man can satisfy the language.

This concludes a brief summary of these prophecies. No doubt there is a certain vagueness about many of them, and this is often appealed to as destroying their value. There is not, it is said, a single instance which of itself would afford more than a weak argument. But even were we to admit this, and it is certainly doubtful, it would not settle the question, for the force of these prophecies lies in their *cumulative* nature. That Rationalists should prefer to consider each singly is of course natural, just as a general would prefer to fight his opponents one regiment at a time; but it is hardly a fair method. And when we consider them together they form a very strong argument.

To put it shortly, we find numerous passages in the Old Testament which refer to the future Messiah as a *Sovereign*, Who should found a universal kingdom of at least a partly religious character, and reign over both Jews and Gentiles. And yet there are others which speak of His *sufferings* and even death; and others again which refer to His *Divinity*, and often in close connection with His humanity. It is needless to point out how completely these prophecies are one and all fulfilled in the Christ of the Gospels, and how utterly impossible it is to find any other fulfilment of them.

(B.) PREDICTIONS.

We pass on now to the other branch of the subject.

<sup>1</sup> *Comp.* 2 Sam. 11. 24; 12. 9.

It is asserted that many of the actual events in the life of Christ are foretold in the Old Testament in the most exact manner; the following being four of the more important groups. Many others might be quoted, and have indeed their fulfilment alluded to in the New Testament; but as this is often in only a figurative sense, they have been excluded from the list. And we have also excluded all isolated predictions of single events, which however applicable to Christ might be also applicable to someone else; such as His being preceded by a messenger, or working miracles.<sup>1</sup>

The *time* of the Messiah's coming, which was to be seventy weeks (admitted by critics of all schools to be weeks of *years*, *i.e.*, 490 years, not 490 days) from a command to rebuild Jerusalem (not merely the Temple), and counting from either of the decrees of Artaxerxes,<sup>2</sup> B.C. 457 or 445, this brings us very near to the time of Christ. And not only were the Jews then expecting their Messiah, but Tacitus and Josephus both say that this was due to certain passages in their Scriptures.<sup>3</sup> Daniel also alludes in this passage to the death of the Messiah, the objects for which He came, especially His Atonement for sin, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and several other points (Dan. 9. 24-27).

His being crucified, *i.e.*, His hands and feet being pierced, with many attendant circumstances such as His feeling forsaken by God, and being despised of men; His being exposed to die in public with His

<sup>1</sup> Mal. 3. 1; Isa. 35. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Ezra 7. 11-27; Neh. 2. 1-8.

<sup>3</sup> Tac. Hist., Bk. v., ch. xiii.; Josephus, Wars, vi. 5.

enemies all around, the manner in which they mocked Him, and the exact words they used: His being abandoned by His disciples, and suffering extreme thirst; and the fact that the men who crucified Him parted His garments among them, casting lots for some of them. And then His Resurrection seems hinted at, as the strain suddenly changes; He is somehow restored to life, and the event is of world-wide significance (Ps. 22).

Various incidents in His Passion are foretold (though in figurative language difficult to understand) by Zechariah, including the manner in which He rode into Jerusalem; His being sold for thirty pieces of silver; the money being brought into the House of the Lord, and afterwards given to the potter; His side being pierced and His hands wounded; His Atonement for sin; His being forsaken by His disciples and dying a violent death, though He was the *fellow* or equal of the Lord of Hosts (Zech. 9. 9; 11. 12, 13; 12. 10; 13. 1, 6, 7).

Other incidents are foretold in Isa. 53, including His being rejected by the Jews; His patience under suffering; His not pleading on His trial; His dying with malefactors, and being buried with the rich; and then prolonging His days, *i.e.*, rising from the dead, and founding His Church.

It would of course take too long to go through the above predictions in detail, since, when carefully examined, they will be found to be far more striking and circumstantial than might be thought at first sight. And though we might just glance at each in turn, it

seems better to select a single example and discuss that fully; and we have chosen the last, which is undoubtedly one of the strongest.

(I.) *Isaiah's account of Christ's death* (52. 13-53. 12).

It may be pointed out at starting that there are no variations in translation worth speaking of, and that no one denies the antiquity of the passage. Moreover, it is taken from a writing avowedly prophetic. There is scarcely any doubt that the writer thought, and intended his readers to think, that he was predicting future events. And it forms one complete whole, closely connected together and not mixed up with any other subject. And so in regard to its fulfilment, most of the details mentioned below occurred within a few hours. We will consider first the historical, and then the doctrinal agreement.

With regard to the *Historical Agreement*, subjoined is the translation from the R.V., together with the corresponding events. It will be observed that the sufferings of the Messiah are usually expressed in the past tense, and His triumph in the future, the prophet placing himself, as it were, between the two. This was to emphasise the fact that the sufferings were the *cause* of the triumph, which could not be so graphically expressed in any other way.

'Behold, my servant shall deal wisely, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.

The excellence of Christ's teaching and conduct is now generally admitted; while His exalted position as the object of worship by millions of men cannot be disputed.

'Like as many were astonished at thee, (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men) so shall he sprinkle many nations ;

'Kings shall shut their mouths at him ; for that which had not been told them shall they see ; and that which they had not heard shall they understand.

'Who hath believed our report ? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ?

'For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground : he hath no form nor comeliness ; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.

'He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief : and as one from whom men hide their face ; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

And yet at the time of His death, which was in public so that *many* saw Him, the cruel treatment He had received (crowning with thorns, scourging, etc.) must have terribly disfigured His face and body.

But just as men were then astonished at the greatness of His sufferings, so are they now at the greatness of His triumph, even kings are silent when contemplating such an unheard-of change.

Indeed the story of His life, which the prophet is about to declare, is so marvellous that it can scarcely be believed.

He lived at Nazareth, which the Jews always regarded as *dry ground* so far as anything good was concerned ;<sup>1</sup> and His appearance was humble and devoid of any outward splendour, such as might attract men to Him.

He was not only rejected by the Jews through life, but officially and formally so at the time of His death, when they said, *Not this man, but Barabbas* ; and His life was certainly one of sorrows.

<sup>1</sup> John 1. 46 ; 7. 52.



' But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed.

' All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

' He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself and opened not his mouth ; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb ; yea, he opened not his mouth.

' By oppression and judgment he was taken away ; and as for his generation, who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living ? for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

' And they made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich (or a *rich man*, American R.V.) in his death.

' Although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

' Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him : he hath put him to grief ; when thou shalt make

The scourging and other ill-treatment is here alluded to.

Christ, who is frequently called the Lamb of God, not only bore His ill-treatment with the utmost patience, but refused to plead at His trial, to the utter astonishment of Pilate.<sup>1</sup>

He was not killed accidentally, nor by the mob, but had a judicial trial ; and was most unjustly condemned.

He was appointed to die between two robbers, and yet buried in the sepulchre of a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea.

Moreover, His judge repeatedly declared that He was innocent ; as did also His fellow-sufferer, the centurion, and His betrayer.

Yet after His death He *prolonged* His days, *i.e.*, rose again from the dead.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 27. 14.

his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many: and he shall bear their iniquities.

'Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death.

'And was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.'

His subsequent triumph in the Christian Church is here alluded to.

This exactly agrees with His dying a shameful death between two robbers; and yet praying for His murderers, 'Father, forgive them.'

It seems hardly necessary to insist on the parallelism shown above; it is indisputable. The sufferings and the triumph of the future Redeemer are foretold with equal confidence and with equal clearness, though they might well have seemed incompatible.

We pass on now to the *Doctrinal Agreement*, for the significance of the passage does not depend on these predictions alone, though they are sufficiently remarkable, but on the *meaning* which the writer assigns to the great tragedy. It is the Christian doctrine concerning Christ's death, not merely the events attending it, which is here insisted on. This will be best shown by adopting the previous system of parallel columns, showing in the first the chief items in the Christian

doctrine, and in the other the prophet's words corresponding to them.

All mankind are sinners.

Christ alone was sinless.

He suffered not for His own sins, but for those of others. Nor was this the mere accidental suffering of an innocent man for a guilty one ; it was a great work of atonement, an offering for sin. This is the central feature of the Christian doctrine, and it is strongly emphasised in the prophecy.

And this Atonement was the fulfilment of all the Old Jewish sacrifices ; so that there was a special fitness in Christ's being put to death at the time of the Jewish Passover.

' All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every-one to his own way.'

' My righteous servant.'

' He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.'

' Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.'

' He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed.'

' The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.'

' For the transgression of my people was he stricken.'

' When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.'

' And he shall bear their iniquities.'

' He bare the sin of many.'

This is shown by the sacrificial language employed. Thus the *offering for sin* is the same word as that used in Leviticus and elsewhere for the *guilt-offering* (or *trespass-offering*, A.V.). While the curious expression ' So shall he sprinkle many nations ' evidently refers to the sprinkling of the blood in the Jewish sacrifices (*e.g.*, Lev. 16. 14-19), as the same

And yet it availed not only for the Jews, but for all mankind.

Moreover, Christ's sacrifice was voluntary ; He freely laid down His life, no one took it from Him (John 10. 18).

And yet it was in a certain sense God's doing, and acceptable to Him.

In consequence of this free offering of Himself, Christ founded His Church, a mighty empire, able to hold its own with the kingdoms of the world.

And His Church has been most successful in winning souls to God, which is pre-eminently what God wishes.

Moreover, Christ foresaw these fruits of His Passion, and was satisfied with them.

word is used, and means cleansing them from sin.

The *many nations* must include Gentiles as well as Jews.

'He poured out his soul unto death.' This implies that the act was voluntary, or it would be 'He died,' or 'He was put to death.' And this is rendered still clearer from the context. It was *because* He did this that He was to divide the spoil with the strong, etc. His death was thus the condition of His victory, and must clearly have been voluntary. And the same is shown by the expression *He humbled Himself*, which also implies that the humiliation was voluntary.

'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him ; he hath put him to grief.'

'Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.'

'He shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.'

'The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.'

'He shall see his seed.'

'He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.'

The former passage might

mean literal children, but the latter expressly calls it the travail of His *soul*, not body; so that it was His spiritual children in the Christian Church that Christ was to see.

Lastly, Christians are justified only by Christ's Atonement.

'By his knowledge (or *by the knowledge of himself*, American R.V.) shall my righteous servant justify many: and he shall bear their iniquities.'

All this, it is plain, exactly suits the Christ of Christendom: and it is equally plain that it does not and cannot suit anyone else, since many of the Christian doctrines are quite unique, and have no parallel in the Jewish or any other religion. This is indeed so striking, that if anyone acquainted with Christianity, but unacquainted with Isaiah, came across the passage for the first time, he would probably ascribe it to one of St. Paul's Epistles. And certain it is that every word of it might be found there with perfect fitness.

Moreover, the choice lies between the Christian interpretation and none at all. The ancient Jews interpreted the passage as referring to their future Messiah;<sup>1</sup> the modern Jews explain it as referring to the past calamities and future restoration of the Jewish nation, which they say is here personified as a single man, the servant of the Lord. But though Isaiah frequently speaks of the Jews as *Israel my*

<sup>1</sup> Several references are given in Edersheim's *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 1901, vol. ii., p. 727.

*servant* or *Jacob my servant*,<sup>1</sup> he nowhere else uses the term my *righteous* servant, which he does here, and which would be obviously inapplicable to the nation. While, in the nearest parallel passage, before quoted,<sup>2</sup> the *Lord's Servant* is clearly distinguished from both Jacob and Israel, and evidently means the Messiah.

Moreover, this theory not only leaves all the minuter details of the prophecy unexplained and inexplicable, but it ignores its very essence, which is the atoning character of the sufferings. No one can say that the sufferings of the Jews were voluntary, or that they were not for their own sins, but for those of other people, which were in consequence atoned for. Or, to put the argument in other words, if the *He* refers to the Jewish nation, to whom does the *our* refer in such sentences as *He was wounded for our transgressions*? This interpretation then is hopelessly untenable, and the passage either means what Christians assert or it means nothing.

In conclusion, it must be again pointed out that all these minute historical details attending Christ's death, and all these remarkable Christian doctrines concerning it, are all found within fifteen verses of a writing avowedly prophetic, and written many centuries before the time of Christ. It would be hard to over-estimate the enormous improbability of all these coincidences being due to chance; indeed, such a conclusion seems incredible.

## (2.) *Various Objections.*

As before said we have not time to examine the other

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Isa. 41. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. 49. 6-7.

predictions in detail, but pass on to the three most important objections. The first is, that in some cases, especially in Psalm 22., there is nothing to show that the passage refers to the Messiah at all, though, strange to say, some of the Jews so interpreted it;<sup>1</sup> and therefore, if there is an agreement, it is at most only a chance coincidence. But in answer to this it may be remarked that if such coincidences are numerous, there is a strong probability that they are not due to chance, but to *design* somewhere. While even in regard to this particular Psalm, there is a slight indication that it refers to the Messiah. For the sense seems to require that *my only one* of v. 20 (margin R.V.) should be *thy only one*, as the sufferer is speaking of himself all through. And this term is not only very applicable to the Messiah (whom Christians believe to be God's only Son), but could scarcely be used of anyone else.

Moreover, if these prophecies do not refer to Christ, it is difficult to see what they do refer to ; for we have purposely omitted all those that seem to have had some other application. Psalm 22., for instance, is quite inapplicable to David or anyone else at that time, for crucifixion was not a Jewish punishment. And any such reference is rendered still more improbable, because the sufferer appears to have no consciousness of *sin*, and never laments his own wickedness, as the psalmists so frequently do when writing about themselves. On the other hand, the psalm is applicable to Christ in a variety of details, including, it may be

<sup>1</sup> Edersheim, ii., 718, 732.

mentioned, this very point of His unconsciousness of sin. (See Chapter XX.)

Anyhow, this objection is intrinsically unsound. It simply begs the question as to *who* was the real writer of these ancient prophecies. Was it the human prophet, or was it God Who inspired the prophet to write as he did? In the latter case, there is no reason for thinking that the prophets either knew, or thought they knew, the whole meaning of their prophecies; and the objection falls to the ground at once. While it does not apply at all in the majority of cases, where the writer was avowedly referring to the future Messiah.

The second objection is, that if the predictions really refer to Christ, why are they not plainer? But why should they have been plainer? We have no means of deciding what amount of clearness is to be expected in a prediction; and had they been clearer, they might have prevented their own fulfilment. Had the Jews known for certain that Christ was their Messiah, they could scarcely have crucified Him; and it appears to many that the predictions are already about as clear as they could be without doing this. Moreover, the prophets, as far as we can judge, did not receive their revelations audibly and in a connected manner, but fell into a trance when they saw visions. And this explains many of the peculiarities of their writings. Future events are often represented in the present or past tense; future persons are addressed, and even pointed to as if on a stage (Behold, etc.); while at other times they are represented as speaking; all of which



tends to some obscurity. The important point, however, is not whether the predictions might not have been plainer, but whether they are not already too plain to be accidental.

The third objection is, that some of the events fulfilling the predictions never happened, but were purposely invented. This, however, destroys altogether the moral character of the Evangelists, who are supposed to tell deliberate falsehoods so as to get a pretended fulfilment of an old prophecy. And the difficulty of admitting this is very great. Moreover, such explanations can only apply to a very few cases; since, as a rule, the events occurred *in public*, and must therefore have been well known at the time.

And even in those cases where the event was so trivial, that it might possibly have been invented, such an explanation is often untenable. Take, for example, the manner in which Christ on the cross was mocked by His enemies, who said, 'He trusted in God, let him deliver him now if he desireth him.'<sup>1</sup> A more probable incident under the circumstances can scarcely be imagined. But, supposing the words were never uttered, is it conceivable that the Evangelist should have invented them merely to get a pretended fulfilment of Ps. 22. 8, where the Crucified One is mocked with these identical words, and yet have never pointed out the fulfilment himself, but have trusted to the chance of his readers discovering it? None of these objections, then, are of much importance.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 27. 43.

## (C.) CONCLUSION.

Before concluding this chapter, one other point of some importance has to be considered, which refers to the Christian doctrine of the *Trinity*. This claims to be a fuller and more complete view of the Deity than the Monotheism of the Old Testament ; but in no way inconsistent with it. Christianity is only a special form of Monotheism, for it asserts that there is but one God ; the opposite doctrine that there are Three Gods being expressly repudiated in the Athanasian Creed. Now it is to say the least a remarkable fact that this doctrine seems hinted at in the Old Testament. For instance, the Hebrew word for God, *Elohim*, is a plural word, though, strange to say, it generally takes a singular adjective and verb. Attempts have of course been made to minimise the significance of this by pointing out that a few other Hebrew words, such as *lord* and *master*, sometimes do the same, or by regarding it as a survival from some polytheistic religion, or else as being the plural of Majesty, a sort of royal *We*. But even if so, the fact remains that the Jews used a plural word for God with a singular verb. The same word, it may be added, when used of false gods, takes a plural verb.

Moreover, the Deity is at times represented as speaking in the plural number.<sup>1</sup> For instance, He says, *Let us make man in our image*, as if consulting with other Persons of the Godhead. And just afterwards we read, 'God made man in *his* own image,' thus showing a unity as well as a plurality in the Godhead.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 1. 26 ; 3. 22 ; Isa. 6. 8.

Another and still more remarkable expression is, 'Behold, the man is become as one of us.' This cannot possibly be explained as a 'plural of Majesty'; for though a king might speak of himself as *We* or *Us*, no king ever spoke of himself as *one of Us*. Such an expression can only be used when there are other persons of similar rank with the speaker; and therefore when used by God, it necessarily implies that there are other Divine Persons. So again God is represented as saying, 'Whom shall *I* send, and who will go for *us*?' which also seems to indicate a plurality in unity; while the immediately preceding *thrice* holy points to this being a Trinity. The existence of such passages seems to require some explanation, and Christianity alone can explain them.

With regard to the Prophecies, one more point has yet to be noticed, which is their number and interdependence. They are not isolated prophecies, no mere collection of curious coincidences. But they form a complete series, extending through a great part of the Old Testament; and here as elsewhere this has a double bearing on the argument.

In the first place, it does not at all increase the difficulty of the *Christian* interpretation; for twenty predictions are practically no more difficult to admit than two. Indeed, the fact that instead of being a few isolated examples, they form a complete series, rather lessens the difficulty than otherwise.

On the other hand, this increases the difficulty of the *rationalistic* interpretation enormously; for twenty predictions are far more difficult to deny than two. If one

is explained as a lucky coincidence, this will not account for the next ; if that is got rid of by some unnatural interpretation of the words, it will not account for the third, and so on indefinitely. Thus the difficulties of this theory are not only great in themselves, but are all cumulative ; and hence together they seem insuperable. Anyhow, it is clear that these Prophecies afford a strong additional argument in favour of Christianity.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THAT THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST CONFIRMS THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

The character of Christ can only be deduced from the New Testament, any other Christ being purely imaginary.

(A.) HIS TEACHING.

- (1.) Its admitted excellence.
- (2.) Two slight objections.
- (3.) His unconsciousness of sin ; so He must have been a perfect Man.

(B.) HIS CLAIMS.

He not only asserted that He was the Jewish Messiah, but—

- (1.) That He was Superhuman—claiming to be the Ruler, Redeemer, and Final Judge of the world.
- (2.) That He was Divine—claiming an Equality, a Unity, and a Pre-existence with God.
- (3.) And this is how all His contemporaries, both friends and foes, understood Him.

(C.) THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE.

Christ cannot, therefore, have been merely a good man ; He was either *God*, as He claimed to be, or else a *bad* man, for making such claims. But the latter view is disproved by His Moral Character.

In this chapter we propose to consider the Character of Christ, and its bearing on the truth of Christianity. Now our knowledge of Christ's character can only be

derived from the four Gospels ; indeed, a Christ with any other character assigned to Him is a purely imaginary being, and might as well be called by some other name. Taking, then, the Gospels as our guide, what is the character of Christ ? Obviously this can be best deduced from His own recorded *teaching* and *claims*, both of which are fortunately given at great length ; so we will consider these first, and then the *great alternative* which they force upon us.

(A.) THE TEACHING OF CHRIST.

Under this head we will first notice the admitted excellence of Christ's teaching, then two objections which are sometimes made, and lastly His unconsciousness of sin.

(I.) *Its admitted excellence.*

To begin with, the excellence of Christ's moral teaching hardly needs to be insisted on at the present day ; it is practically that now acknowledged by the civilised world. Moreover, rationalists as well as Christians have exhausted language to proclaim its merits. For instance, to quote a few examples :—

‘ Religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity ; nor even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ should approve our life.’—*J. S. Mill*.<sup>1</sup>

‘ Jesus remains to humanity an inexhaustible source

<sup>1</sup> *Nature, the Utility of Religion and Theism*, 2nd edit., 1874, p. 255.

of moral regenerations.' And again, 'In Him is condensed all that is good and lofty in our nature.'—*E. Rénan*.<sup>1</sup>

'The teaching of Jesus, however, carried morality to the sublimest point attained, or even attainable, by humanity.' And again, 'He presented the rare spectacle of a life, so far as we can estimate it, uniformly noble and consistent with His own lofty principles.'—*Author of 'Supernatural Religion'*.<sup>2</sup>

'It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love ; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions ; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice ; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists.'—*W. E. H. Lecky*.<sup>3</sup>

These quotations are only samples of many which might be given ; but it is practically undisputed that the morality taught by Christ is the best the world has ever seen. And it is also undisputed that His life was in entire harmony with His teaching. He lived, as far as we can judge, a holy and blameless life, and His character has never been surpassed in history or

<sup>1</sup> Life of Jesus, pp. 370, 375.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. ii., p. 487.

<sup>3</sup> History of European Morals, 3rd edit., 1877, vol. ii., p. 8.

fiction. He had no prototype, and has had no successor.

(2.) *Two slight objections.*

There are, however, two slight objections. The first is that Christ's teaching was not *original*; and, strictly speaking, this is perhaps true. Something similar to all His maxims has been discovered in more ancient times, either in Egypt, India, China, or elsewhere. But this hardly affects the argument. An unlearned Jew living at Nazareth cannot be supposed to have derived his teaching from the works of Confucius, Zoroaster, and others, while it is a vast improvement on all of them put together.

The important point is, that there was nothing among the Jews of His own time which could have produced, or even have invented, such a character. He was immeasurably better than all His contemporaries, and the attempts of some critics to show that His teaching was only a little superior to that of the Jewish Rabbis, from whom He is supposed to have learnt it, fail hopelessly. For if the teaching was so similar, why has the effect been so different? All the Rabbis put together have not exerted an influence on the world a thousandth part that of Christ.

The second objection refers to *certain portions* of Christ's teaching. For example, He advocates the non-resistance of evil, and seems to place virginity above marriage to an even exaggerated extent.<sup>1</sup> I have never seen a satisfactory explanation of the latter passage; but it is obvious on the face of it that it

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 5. 39; 19. 12.



cannot be meant for universal application, or it would lead to the extinction of the human race. It can only be a *counsel of perfection*, similar to that of giving away the whole of one's property.

Again, several of the *parables* are said to be unjust, such as that of the wedding garment, the workmen in the vineyard, and the unrighteous steward. But parables cannot be pressed literally, and the interpretation put on these by different commentators is so various that no valid objection can be founded on them. However, we will consider the last, which is the one most often objected to.

Here it will be remembered that though the steward had been apparently guilty of dishonesty, he was *commended* because he had done wisely.<sup>1</sup> But the idea that the parable was meant to advocate dishonesty is out of the question. Nor is the explanation hard to find. Suppose at the present day an ingenious robbery was committed, and a person said that he could not help admiring the scoundrel for his cleverness. This would not imply an approval of dishonesty, for two reasons; partly because the man was still called a scoundrel, and partly because he was not praised as a whole, but a particular part of his conduct was singled out for admiration, which was not his dishonesty but his cleverness. So in the case before us. The steward was still called *unrighteous*, and only a part of his conduct was singled out for commendation, which was not his dishonesty but his *wisdom*. The obvious meaning is that wisdom is so desirable that it is to be

<sup>1</sup> Luke 16. 8.

commended even in worldly matters, and even in a bad cause ; and therefore still more to be aimed at in religious matters, and in a good cause. This objection, then, is quite untenable. The difficulties we meet with are merely like spots on the sun, and would scarcely be thought difficulties in any other religion.

(3.) *Christ's unconsciousness of sin.*

A most remarkable point has now to be noticed. It is that, notwithstanding His perfect moral teaching, there is not in the character of Christ the slightest consciousness of *sin*. In all His numerous discourses, and even in His prayers, there is not a single word which implies that He thought He ever had done, or ever could do, anything wrong Himself. He blamed self-righteousness in others, and exhorted them to repentance ; but never hinted that He had any need of it Himself. And this is the more striking when we reflect that good men are, as a rule, most conscious of their faults. But yet here was One who carried moral goodness to its utmost limit, whose precepts are admittedly perfect, and yet who never for a moment thought that He was not fulfilling them Himself. Such a character is absolutely unique in the world's history. It can only be explained by saying that Christ was not only a good man, but a *perfect* man, since goodness without perfection would only have made Him more conscious of the faults He had.

(B.) THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST.

We pass on now to the claims of Christ ; and His high moral character would plainly lead us to place the utmost confidence in what He said about Himself.

Unfortunately, His statements are so well known that it is hard to appreciate their real force and significance. What, we must ask, would they have sounded like, and what would they have meant, when first uttered ? For He claimed, as we shall see, to be both Superhuman and Divine ; and this is how all His contemporaries understood Him.

(I.) *His Claim to be Superhuman.*

This is shown by three main arguments, for Christ declared that He was the Ruler, Redeemer, and final Judge of the world. In the first place, Christ claimed to be the *Ruler* of the world, saying in so many words that all things had been delivered unto Him, and that He possessed all authority, both in heaven and on earth. Moreover, this dominion was to be equally complete over the hearts of His followers. Their loyalty to Him was the one thing needful ; and He claimed absolute self-surrender, even to giving up all human ties, however close.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, Christ claimed to be the *Redeemer* of the world. He distinctly asserted that He came to give His life a ransom for many, and that His blood was shed for the remission of sins.<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, Christ claimed to be the final *Judge* of the world. This stupendous claim alone shows that He considered Himself quite above and distinct from the rest of mankind. While they were all to be judged according to their works, He was to be the Judge Himself, coming in the clouds of heaven with thousands

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 11. 27 ; 28. 18 ; Luke 10. 22 ; Matt. 10. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 20. 28 ; 26. 28 ; Mark 10. 45 ; 14. 24.

of angels. And His decision was to be final and without appeal, and apparently based on a man's behaviour towards Himself. And this tremendous claim, be it observed, does not depend on single texts or passages, but runs all through the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the whole of His Ministry—from His Sermon on the Mount, to His trial before Caiaphas—He persistently asserted that He was to be the final Judge of the world. It is hardly credible that a mere man, however presumptuous, should ever have made such a claim as this. Can we imagine anyone doing so at the present day? and what should we think of him if he did?

The above passages show clearly the Superhuman character of Christ. They are, however, just capable of an *Arian* interpretation, which is, that though Christ was far above men, and even angels, yet He was not, strictly speaking, God. But this opinion has few supporters at the present day; and persons who now admit that Christ was Superhuman generally admit that He was Divine, which, as we shall see, He also claimed to be.

(2.) *His Claim to be Divine.*

Like the preceding, this is shown by three main arguments; for Christ declared His Equality, Unity, and Pre-existence with God. In the first place, Christ claimed an *Equality* with God. He distinctly asserted that the same honour should be given to Himself as to God the Father; that men should believe in Him as

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 7. 22; 10. 32; 13. 41; 16. 13-16, 27; 24. 30; 25. 31-46; 26. 64; and similar passages in the other Gospels.

well as in God ; that He and the Father would together dwell in the souls of men ; and that men were to be baptized into His Name, as well as into that of the Father.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, Christ claimed a *Unity* with God. He did not assert that He was another God, but said distinctly that He and the Father were One ; that whoever beheld Him beheld the Father ; that whoever had seen Him had seen the Father ; and that He was in the Father, and the Father in Him.<sup>2</sup>

Thirdly, Christ claimed a *Pre-existence* with God. He asserted that He had descended out of heaven ; that He had come down from heaven ; that He came out from the Father and was come into the world ; and that even before its creation He had shared God's glory.<sup>3</sup> And in another passage, '*Before Abraham was, I am,*'<sup>4</sup> He not only claims pre-existence to Abraham, but implies that this was an eternal existence, irrespective of time, since the words are not, *Before Abraham was I was*, but *I am*. While, the use of this latter phrase, which was the solemn name God gave Himself in the Old Testament, shows that the Speaker wished to represent Himself as being God.

The above passages show plainly that Christ claimed to be *Divine*. On the other side we have the passage where he objects to the ruler calling Him *good*, saying that the word was only applicable to God.<sup>5</sup> But here He was probably not denying that He was good, but

<sup>1</sup> John 5. 23 ; 14. 1, 23 ; Matt. 28. 19. See also John 5. 18.

<sup>2</sup> John 10. 30 ; 12. 45 ; 14. 9, 10 ; 17. 21.

<sup>3</sup> John 3. 13 ; 6. 38 ; 16. 28 ; 17. 5.

<sup>4</sup> John 8. 58 ; Exod. 3. 14.      <sup>5</sup> Luke 18. 19.

merely showing the inconsistency of anyone calling Him so, who was not one of His disciples, and did not acknowledge His divine claims. And it is interesting to note that when thus regarded as a mere earthly teacher, He refused to be called *good*. Some other texts are often quoted, but they obviously refer to Christ's *human* nature alone, and will be examined in Chapter XXIII. We need not consider them here, for if (as Christians believe) Christ was both God and Man, there is no difficulty in the fact that He should sometimes speak of Himself as Divine, and sometimes as human. It is precisely what we should expect on the Christian theory, though of course on any other it introduces an element of inconsistency into His character. Anyhow, it does not alter the fact that Christ did repeatedly claim to be both superhuman and Divine.

(3.) *How these Claims were understood at the time.*

We have now to consider how these claims were understood at the time. And first, as to *Christ's friends*. We have overwhelming evidence that after His Resurrection all the disciples and early Christians believed their Master to be both superhuman and Divine. And to realise the full significance of this, we must remember that they were not polytheists, who did not mind how many gods they believed in, and were willing to deify Roman Emperors or anyone else; but they were strict monotheists. They firmly believed that there was but one God, and yet they firmly believed that Christ was divine. This is shown throughout the New Testament.

For instance, the authors of the Synoptic Gospels record His miraculous Birth, Resurrection, and Ascension, as well as His numerous miracles, and other signs of Divine power. And, as we have before pointed out, they always relate that Christ performed His miracles *by His own authority*, which seems to imply His Divinity, especially when combined with the fact that He could confer the power of working miracles on others.<sup>1</sup> And as to St. John, he asserts Christ's Divinity in so many words at the beginning of his Gospel, saying that the Word, who afterwards became flesh, *was God*; and he records St. Thomas as declaring this belief in equally explicit terms, addressing Christ as *my Lord and my God*, which titles He fully accepted.<sup>2</sup> It is also worth noting that several passages, which in the Old Testament refer to Jehovah, are in the Gospels applied to Christ. Thus we read how on one occasion Isaiah saw the glory of the *Lord of Hosts*; and St. John quotes some of the words, saying that Isaiah spoke them when he saw *Christ's* glory.<sup>3</sup>

Next, as to the Book of Revelation. The evidence this affords is important, because many critics who dispute the genuineness of all our Gospels, yet allow that this Book was written by St. John. And if so, it shows conclusively that one at least of Christ's intimate followers firmly believed in His Divinity. For he not only speaks of Christ as the object of universal worship both in heaven and on earth, but repeatedly describes Him as *the First and the Last*, which is the title used

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 10. 8; Luke 9. 1.

<sup>2</sup> John 1. 1; 20. 28.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. 6. 1-10; John 12. 41.

by God in the Old Testament, and which is plainly inapplicable to anyone else.<sup>1</sup> And we may ask, is it conceivable that an intimate friend of Christ should have believed Him to be the Everlasting God, unless He had claimed to be so Himself, and had supported His claim by working miracles, and rising from the dead ?

Equally important evidence is afforded by St. Paul's Epistles. For though he is not likely to have known Christ intimately, he must have been acquainted with numbers who did. And his early conversion, about A.D. 35, together with the fact that he had previously persecuted the Church at Jerusalem, and afterwards visited some of the Apostles there, must have made him well acquainted with the Christian doctrines from the very first. And all through his Epistles he bears witness to the *superhuman* character of Christ ; declaring, among other things, His sinlessness, and that He is the Ruler, Redeemer, and final Judge of the world.<sup>2</sup>

He also bears witness to His *Divine* character ; for he asserts more than once that God sent His Son into the world, thus showing the pre-existence of Christ. And he implies the same when he says that though Christ ' was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor ; ' the latter words referring to His condescension in becoming Man, when as God He had possessed all riches.<sup>3</sup> While in other passages he asserts His Divinity in so many words, saying that He is over all

<sup>1</sup> Rev. 1. 17, 18 ; 2. 8 ; 5. 11-14 ; 22. 12, 13 ; Isa. 44. 6.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. 5. 16, 21 ; Rom. 14. 9 ; 1 Cor. 15. 3 ; 2 Cor. 5. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 8. 3 ; Gal. 4. 4 ; 2 Cor. 8. 9.



God blessed for ever ; that we shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of God, which elsewhere he calls the Judgment-seat of Christ ; that He was originally in the form of God, and on an equality with God ; that in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ; that He is our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us ; and that the Psalmist prophesied of Him when he said, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.'<sup>1</sup> The only important text on the other side is where St. Paul says there is *one God the Father*, and *one Lord Jesus Christ*,<sup>2</sup> which is reproduced in the Nicene Creed. But though the statement is a difficult one, it cannot be pressed as implying that Christ is not *God* ; for if so it would equally imply that the Father was not *Lord*, which few would contend was St. Paul's meaning.

With regard to the above passages, many of which occur in the admittedly genuine Epistles, it is important to notice that the allusions are all incidental. St. Paul does not attempt to prove the superhuman and Divine character of Christ, but refers to it as if it were undisputed. He evidently believed it himself, and took for granted that his readers did so too. And his readers included not only his own converts at Corinth and elsewhere, but the converts of other Apostles at Rome, which was a Church he had not then visited ; and also a strong party of opponents in Galatia, with whom he was arguing. It is clear, then, that these doctrines were not peculiar to St. Paul, but were the common

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 9. 5 ; 14. 10 ; 2 Cor. 5. 10 ; Phil. 2. 6 ; Col. 2. 9 ; Titus 2. 13 ; Heb. 1. 8. See also Acts 20. 28.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 8. 6.

property of all Christians from the earliest times. And when combined with the previous evidence, this leaves no doubt as to how Christ's *friends* understood His claims. Whatever they may have thought of them before the Resurrection, that event convinced them that they were true, and they never hesitated in this belief.

But next as to *Christ's foes*. The evidence here is equally convincing. In St. John's Gospel we read that on several occasions during His life, when Christ asserted His superhuman and Divine character, the Jews wanted to kill Him in consequence ; often avowing their reason for doing so with the utmost frankness. 'For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy ; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.'<sup>1</sup> And in thus doing they were only acting in accordance with their law, which expressly commanded a blasphemer to be stoned.

In every one of these instances, it is to be noticed, Christ never repudiates the claims attributed to Him ; He never modified them in any way, nor said that He had been misunderstood. In only one case did He offer any explanation whatever. He then appealed to the passage in the Old Testament, 'I said, Ye are gods,' and asserted that He was much better entitled to the term, since He was sent into the world by the Father, and did the works of the Father. And He then reasserted His unity with the Father, which was the very point objected to by the Jews.

Moreover, not only during His life did Christ make

<sup>1</sup> John 10. 33 ; see also 5. 18 ; 8. 59 ; 11. 8 ; Lev. 24. 16.

these claims to be Divine, but He persevered with them even when it brought about His death. It is undisputed that the Jews judged Him worthy of death for *blasphemy*, and for nothing else. This is the teaching not of one Gospel alone, but of each of the four.<sup>1</sup> Every biography of Christ we possess represents this as the real charge against Him; though, of course, when tried before the Roman governor, that of disloyalty to Cæsar was brought up as well.

There is but one conclusion to be drawn from all this. It is that Christ did really claim to be both superhuman and Divine; that He deliberately and repeatedly asserted these claims during His life; that the hostility of the Jews was thereby aroused, who frequently wanted to kill Him; that He never repudiated these claims, but, on the contrary, persevered with them to the end; and was finally put to death in consequence.

(C.) THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE.

We pass on now to the *great alternative*, which is forced upon us by combining the teaching and the claims of Christ. Before pointing out its importance, we must notice a favourite method of trying to evade the difficulty, which is by saying that the teaching of Christ occurs in the *Synoptic Gospels*, and the claims in the *Fourth*; so that if we deny the accuracy of this single Gospel the difficulty is solved. But unfortunately for this objection, though the Divine claims occur chiefly in the Fourth Gospel, the superhuman claims are most prominent in the other three; and we

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 26. 65; Mark 14. 64; Luke 22. 71; John 19. 7.

have purposely chosen all the passages illustrating them from the Synoptic Gospels *alone*. And these claims are equally fatal to His moral character if He were only a man. For no good man, and indeed very few bad ones, could be so fearfully presumptuous as to claim to be the absolute Ruler of the world, still less to be its Redeemer, and, least of all, to be its one and only Judge hereafter.

This objection, then, must be put aside, and we are forced to conclude that the perfect moral teaching of Christ was accompanied by continual assertions of His own superhuman and Divine character. And as this is a point about which He must have known, it is clear that the statements must have been either true or intentionally false. He must, therefore, have been Divine, or else a deliberate impostor. In other words, the Christ of the Gospels—and history knows of no other—could not have been merely a good man. He was either *God* as He claimed to be, or else a *bad man* for making such claims. This is the *Great Alternative*.

Moreover, it is absolutely unique in the world's history. The founders of other religions may have had great moral virtues, and may yet have taught erroneous doctrines ; but, as a rule, there is no reason for doubting their sincerity ; they believed what they said. Of course there have been religious impostors also, but then their moral character was at fault. In Christ alone we have a Man Whose moral character and teaching have fascinated the world for centuries ; and yet Who, unless His own claims were true, must have been guilty of the grossest egotism, falsehood, and

blasphemy. This is the only logical conclusion to be drawn from the facts we have been considering, and all attempts to evade it fail hopelessly.

Now what effect has this on our present inquiry as to the truth of Christianity? Plainly it affords a strong argument in its favour. For the moral teaching of its Founder is shown to be not only the most perfect the world has ever seen, but combined with a sense of entire sinlessness which is absolutely unique among men. Both of these, however, are combined with claims to a superhuman and Divine character, which, unless they are correct, place their Author at the opposite extreme of the moral scale. In short, unless Christianity is true, its Founder must have been not only the very *best* of men, but also one of the very *worst*; and this is a dilemma from which there is no escape.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THAT THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY ALSO CONFIRMS ITS TRUTH.

#### (A.) PREVIOUS PREPARATION FOR CHRISTIANITY.

Both mental in Greek Philosophy, and moral in the social state of the civilised world. But this could not have accounted for Christianity, nor even for its rapid spread, unless designed.

#### (B.) ITS EARLY TRIUMPHS.

- (1.) Its enormous difficulties.
- (2.) Its marvellous success.
- (3.) The so-called *natural* causes of success: they all imply the truth of the Religion.
- (4.) Contrast with Mahometanism.

#### (C.) ITS SUBSEQUENT HISTORY.

- (1.) Its vitality in the past; very remarkable.
- (2.) Its effect at the present; very beneficial.
- (3.) Its prospects in the future; very hopeful. Objection from *Rationalism*; but this is no new difficulty, while it shows the strength of Christianity, and being only destructive, can never take its place.

#### (D.) CONCLUSION.

The history of Christianity, which seems to have been foreknown to its Founder, affords a strong argument in its favour.

THE argument we have next to consider is that derived from the *History of Christianity*. This religion, it

must be remembered, originated, spread over, and finally conquered the civilised world in an historical age. And since the fact of this conquest can neither be disputed nor ignored, it must be accounted for. As a mere historical problem it requires some solution, for an effect in history, as elsewhere, must have an adequate cause.

(A.) PREVIOUS PREPARATION FOR CHRISTIANITY.

In the first place, it is admitted by all that the state of the civilised world at the time when Christianity arose was to some extent favourable to its success. There was an almost universal peace, so that its missionaries had free access to every country. While the Jews, among whom Christianity arose, were then dispersed throughout the western world, and this gave them special facilities for spreading a new religion. In almost every city there was a synagogue, and here of course Christianity was first preached; and as it was preached by Jews, it at all events obtained a hearing. Moreover the world was in a certain sense *prepared* to accept Christianity; and this is often appealed to as explaining its marvellous progress. But, as we shall see, the explanation, even if admitted, does but imply the truth of the religion.

There was to begin with a kind of intellectual or *mental* preparation in Greek philosophy. For the speculations of the Greeks as to the nature of the Deity had led them to a doctrine of a divine *Logos* or *Word*, which is not very unlike that of the Fourth Gospel, and in the writings of the Greek Jew Philo the idea is much insisted on. Indeed, some have sug-

gested that St. John borrowed his doctrines from Philo ; but this is quite untenable. For St. John's great doctrine, that of the Incarnation, or that the *Word became flesh*, is not hinted at by Philo or any other philosopher ; and this separates the two systems entirely. The Logos of Philo is a kind of intermediate Being, who is neither God nor man ; while the Logos of St. John is both. But still these speculations may doubtless have caused the intellectual world to look more favourably on the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation.

And there was also a kind of *moral* preparation. The old mythologies of Greece and Rome were dying out, they failed to satisfy human nature, and men were longing for something better. They wanted, as men always will want, a religion ; but they wanted it free from the absurdities and immoralities of Pagan worship. Christianity then appeared, and was found by many to meet the demand.

The new religion, then, arose at what has been called a favourable crisis in the world's history, or, as it used to be expressed, Christ came in *the fulness of the time*.<sup>1</sup> This is practically undisputed ; indeed, as said above, the opponents of Christianity appeal to it themselves as a natural way of accounting for its success. But this explanation can hardly be admitted. For Christianity was not a philosophy founded at Rome or Athens, in which case it might be said that the demand caused the supply ; but it arose as a small Jewish sect, basing its doctrines on the actual life of its Founder. Nor

<sup>1</sup> Gal. 4. 4.



could this previous preparation have much aided the spread of the Religion ; for the fierce persecutions which it had to endure show that it did not obviously meet the requirements of the day.

But now suppose, for the sake of argument, that this had been otherwise, and that the world was so suited to receive Christianity as to account for its rapid spread ; would the inference be against its Divine origin ? Certainly not ; for the agreement in this case would be far too close to be accidental. It would show *design*, and precisely such design as we should expect if the Religion were true. Anyone who believes in the Divine government of the world would naturally expect the true Religion to be introduced at a suitable time ; so that the correspondence would merely show that the God Who rules in history is also the God Who introduced Christianity.

(B.) EARLY TRIUMPHS OF CHRISTIANITY.

We pass on now from the previous preparation for Christianity to its early triumphs. And it seems hard to exaggerate either the enormous difficulties it had to overcome, or its marvellous success in overcoming them.

(1.) *Its enormous difficulties.*

In the first place, we must consider the immense difficulties of founding such a religion as Christianity. Our familiarity with the subject prevents us from fully realising this, so perhaps an analogy will help to make it clear. Suppose, then, that missionaries *now* appeared in the cities of Europe, in London and Edinburgh, for example, and preached that an obscure peasant, who

had been put to death somewhere in Persia as a malefactor, had risen from the dead, and was the God of heaven and earth. What chance would they have of making a single convert? And yet the enterprise of first preaching Christianity at Rome or Athens must have been very similar to this, only far more dangerous. Indeed, it is hard to over-estimate the difficulties of founding a religion whose principal doctrine was that of a crucified Saviour. And be it remembered, this doctrine was never shirked by the early Christians; St. Paul preached it boldly, though admitting that it was a *stumbling-block* to the Jews and *foolishness* to the Gentiles.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, Christianity had many other difficulties to contend with. It was *anti-Jewish* in its comprehensiveness, for it abolished all their religious rights and privileges, and proclaimed that the despised Gentiles were henceforth to be their equals. It was *anti-Pagan* in its absolute claims; for it was a religion which could stand no rival, and its success meant the destruction of every heathen altar, the execration of every heathen god. And it could be easily represented as *anti-Roman*; for one of the charges brought against its Founder was that of disloyalty to Cæsar, and a similar charge was made against its preachers at Thessalonica.

Lastly, it had as great difficulties to contend with from a moral point of view. Christianity was a religion of self-denial and self-sacrifice, and such a religion does not naturally commend itself to mankind. Moreover, this aspect of the Religion was always brought promi-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 23.

nently forward by the Apostles. A *forsaking* of sin was its moral requisite, just as a belief in Christ's *atonement* for sin was its mental requisite; and the difficulty of either alone might well have seemed insuperable.

(2.) *Its marvellous success.*

And yet, in spite of all these difficulties, Christianity prevailed. The new religion spread with great rapidity. This we learn not only from Christian writers, who might be thought to exaggerate, but from impartial men such as Suetonius, Tacitus, and the younger Pliny. The former says that in the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41-54) the Christians were so numerous that the Emperor thought it expedient to forbid their religious meetings; Tacitus says that at the time of the great fire (A.D. 64) a *vast multitude* of Christians were discovered at Rome; while Pliny, one of the Roman governors in Asia Minor, complained to the Emperor Trajan that the Christians were so numerous that the temples had long been deserted, though at the time he wrote (A.D. 105) they were being frequented again. And he also bears witness to the exemplary lives of the Christians, their invincible fidelity to their religion and the divine worship they paid to Christ.

And it should be noticed that, as the religion did not originate in either Rome or Asia Minor, Christians were presumably as numerous elsewhere. Nor can it be said that they were only to be found among the poor and ignorant; for, as already pointed out, the undisputed Epistles of St. Paul, such as that to the Romans, show that he thought his readers well educated, and quite able to follow a difficult argument.

Now what was the cause of this wonderful progress ? It is easy to say what was *not* its cause. Physical force and the authority of the Government had nothing to do with it. Its missionaries did not preach sword in hand, nor were they backed up by the civil power. All they did, all they could do, was to appeal to man's reason and conscience, and this appeal was successful. And we learn from the Christians themselves, *e.g.*, in the Acts, that there were two main reasons for this. The first was the confident appeal to the facts of Christianity, such as the Resurrection of Christ, as undisputed and indisputable ; and the second was the occasional aid of miracles. And the more we reflect on the subject, the more difficult it is to account for it without at least one of these causes. For the spread of Christianity was not like that of a mere philosophy, or system of ethics, or scientific theory. It depended entirely on these alleged *matters of fact*, which facts were quite recent at the time of its origin, occurred at the very place where it was first preached, and were open to the hostile criticism of an entire nation. This, it is needless to add, is without a parallel in history.

But it is said, notwithstanding this rapid progress at first, Christianity took nearly three centuries to conquer the civilised world. Undoubtedly it did, but the significance of the conquest is not diminished by this. It is rather increased when we remember that at intervals all through this period the Church suffered the fiercest persecution. That it should have survived such a fearfully prolonged struggle, and have finally conquered, does but show its inherent strength. We

may look in vain for any analogy to this in the rest of history. No other religion has ever withstood such persistent attacks; no other religion has ever obtained such a complete and almost incredible triumph, the Emperor of the civilised world being brought to worship One who had been crucified as a malefactor. In short, the progress of Christianity was as unique as its origin, and can only be adequately accounted for by its truth.

(3.) *The so-called natural causes of success.*

We must next glance at the natural causes which have been alleged as accounting for the wonderful spread of Christianity. Those brought forward by Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Chapter XV.) are five in number; and he seems to think that when combined, they will account for the spread of Christianity. But, in the first place, how are we to account for their *combination*? They are of the most varied character, and even assuming for the moment that they had the result claimed for them, the fact that such various causes should all unite at the same time to favour Christianity seems a coincidence far too remarkable to be accidental. Moreover, when we examine them in detail, it will be found that they one and all imply the truth of the religion.

The five causes are, first, the *intense zeal* of the early Christians. Doubtless this was a most important element in spreading their religion. But what gave them this intense zeal? What was it that made them so fearfully in earnest about their new religion, that they broke from all earthly ties and faced a life of suffering, and a death of martyrdom in preaching it? There can be but one answer to this question. It was because

they were so absolutely convinced of its truth. It was vouched for by what they considered overwhelming evidence, so they willingly risked everything for it. Their zeal, then, is but evidence for their conviction, and their conviction is but evidence for the truth of what they were convinced of ; and valuable evidence too, for they plainly had much better means of knowing about it than we can possibly have.

Secondly, we have the doctrine of a *future life*, with rewards and punishments. Doubtless this also had much to do with the success of Christianity. A longing for immortality seems inherent in man, and the vague guesses of heathen philosophers were quite unable to satisfy this. It *might* be true that men should rise again, but that was all they could say. Christianity alone, resting on the actual fact of Christ's Resurrection, said it was true ; so here men found the assurance they wanted. But is it likely that Christianity should have so thoroughly satisfied them in this respect had there been any real doubt as to Christ's Resurrection ?

Thirdly, come the *miracles* ascribed to the early Christians. Gibbon's argument here is more difficult to follow. If these miracles were actually true, of course they would have greatly assisted the new religion ; but then they would have been, not a natural, but a supernatural cause of success. If, on the other hand, the miracles were false, it is hard to see how the early Christians could have helped their religion by claiming miraculous powers which they did not possess, and which their contemporaries must have known they did not possess.

Fourthly, we have the *pure morality* taught and practised by the early Christians. This had, of course, much to do with helping their religion. But again we must ask, what was it that enabled the Christians alone in that age of vice and wickedness to lead pure lives? They ascribed it themselves to the example and power of their Founder, and nothing else can really account for it. Christian morality cannot be a stream without a source, and no other source can be assigned to it. But could a mere human teacher have had this more than human influence over thousands of converts, most of whom had never seen him?

Lastly, comes the *union* and *discipline* of the early Church. This may have helped Christianity in the later stages of the struggle, but could obviously have been of little use at the commencement. Moreover, why should Christians of various nations and classes have been so thoroughly united in this one matter unless they were convinced of its overwhelming importance? On the whole, then, these so-called natural causes are only secondary causes in the strict sense of the term. The *truth of the religion* is what they all imply, and this is the real cause which alone can account for its success.

#### (4.) *Contrast with Mahometanism.*

And this conclusion is rendered still stronger when we contrast the spread of Christianity with that of Mahometanism. For here we have the one example history affords of the spread of a religion which can be compared with that of Christianity. And yet the contrast between the two is very marked, whether we

consider their method of progress or their alleged evidence of truthfulness.

And first as to the method of progress. For thirteen years Mahomet appealed to man's reason alone, and made remarkably few converts. After this failure of peaceful means he appealed to *force*, and from this time his religion spread rapidly. But its progress has no analogy whatever to that of Christianity, as the means employed were diametrically opposite. In the one case, all we have to account for is that Mahomet should be able to collect an army, that that army should conquer, and that the conquered should adopt the religion of their conquerors, about which they were often given no option. Conquest and conversion went together, and there is scarcely an instance in history of a nation embracing the Mahometan religion, without being first conquered by a Mahometan army. And as Mahomet regularly appealed to the lower passions of mankind, allowing, for instance, himself and his followers a plurality of wives, his success is not very surprising. In the spread of Christianity, on the other hand, no force whatever was employed, and, as we have seen, it had enormous difficulties to contend with. The contrast, then, between the two is precisely what we should expect between the natural and the supernatural spread of a religion, the one advancing by worldly power, the other in spite of it.

But an even greater contrast has still to be noticed, which is that Mahomet did not appeal to *evidential miracles* in support of his claims—that is, to outward matters of fact capable of being judged of by other



people. And this is the more remarkable since he refers to the miracles of previous prophets, including those of Christ, as authentic,<sup>1</sup> but never pretends to have worked any himself. The obvious conclusion is that he felt, as all men must feel, the overwhelming difficulty of asserting public miracles where none occurred, and he therefore appealed to force, because he had nothing else to appeal to. And yet that the first preachers of Christianity asserted such miracles is, as we have seen, undeniable. They were not apologists for a creed, but witnesses for certain facts, such as the Resurrection and other miracles, which they believed they actually saw. There is nothing corresponding to this in regard to Mahometanism or any other religion. It may still be said that Mahometanism shows that a religion can make rapid progress without miracles. Of course it does. But it does not show that a religion which, like Christianity, claims to rest on miracles can make its way if those miracles are false.

(C.) SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY.

We pass on now from the early triumphs of Christianity to its subsequent history, and will consider in turn its past vitality, its present effect, and its future prospects.

(I.) *Its vitality in the past.*

To begin with, a strong argument in its favour is its vitality. It has survived in spite of external assaults and internal schisms, and its spread and continuity can only be satisfactorily accounted for by its truth. This

<sup>1</sup> Koran. Sura. v.

is an argument the force of which increases as time goes on, and fresh difficulties are encountered and overcome. Of course it may be said this is merely a case of survival of the fittest, and only shows that of all early religions Christianity is the one most fitted to survive. But this is only another way of saying that it is the one most adapted to human nature, which, if true, is a strong argument in its favour.

Moreover, the social and political states of the world have changed immensely, and yet Christianity has always kept in touch with them. It has shown itself suitable for different ages, countries, and social conditions, and, unlike other religions, is still in sympathy with the highest forms of civilisation. In short, Christianity has kept possession of the civilised world for over fifteen centuries, and is as vigorous in its age as in its youth. Its long reign is indeed so familiar to us that there is a danger of missing its importance. Can we imagine a man *now* who should found a religion which well-nigh two thousand years hence should be still flourishing, still aggressive, and still recognising him not only as its founder but its God? And yet this would be but a parallel case to that of Christianity. Amid all the changes in history it alone has remained unchanged. Its doctrines, at least the important ones, contained in the Creeds, have been the same century after century, and its Founder is still worshipped by millions.

(2.) *Its effect at the present.*

In close connection with the history of Christianity comes its effect on the world. A religion which has

reigned so long, and over the most civilised nations, must necessarily have had some influence for good or evil. And with regard to Christianity there can be little doubt as to the answer. The present state of the civilised world is a standing witness to its benefits, since all our moral superiority to the nations of old is due almost entirely to this religion.

For example, it has entirely altered the position of women, who are no longer looked down upon as they used to be. It has also altered the position of children, who were formerly considered as property which might be disposed of at the parents' pleasure, infanticide being of course common. Again, it has changed our ideas as to the sick, a hospital being a purely Christian invention. It has also changed our ideas about work. In all the nations of antiquity, and in non-Christian countries of the present day, a workman is looked down upon. Once more, it has created a respect for human life as such, and apart from the position of the individual person, which was unknown in ancient times. In short, our acknowledgment of what are called the *rights of man* is almost entirely due to Christianity. Nor is there anything surprising in this; for the common Fatherhood of God and the common love of Christ naturally afford the strongest argument for the common rights of man. And though Christianity did not, and could not at first, suppress slavery and war, it greatly mitigated their evils from the beginning, and is slowly destroying them.

These are but samples of the effects of Christianity; and that they are really such, and are not merely due

to civilisation, is shown conclusively by ancient Rome. Here civilisation was carried to a great height, and literature and the fine arts flourished ; and yet all the time there were the greatest moral vices, not to mention the barbarous treatment of captives and the combats of gladiators. And though, no doubt, various causes have contributed to the improvement of mankind, the teaching of Christ has certainly been the most important. The obvious and public good which Christianity has done is thus indisputable.

Moreover, another, and perhaps the greater, part of its influence is of such a kind as not to appear much in history. Christianity may have promoted the happiness, increased the virtues, and lessened the vices of millions of men in their domestic lives without history recording it. Nor can it be doubted that it actually has done so from the very commencement. For the undisputed Epistles of St. Paul show that many of his converts were reclaimed from the vilest wickedness, and he could have had no object in stating this unless it was the case.<sup>1</sup>

But it may be said, though Christianity has done so much good, has it not also done some *harm* ? What about the religious wars and persecutions in the Middle Ages ? But with regard to the wars, religion was, as a rule, the excuse rather than the cause ; for had Christianity never been heard of, there would doubtless have been numerous wars in the Middle Ages, as in all other ages. With regard to the persecutions, they must be both admitted and deplored ; but we

<sup>1</sup> E.g., 1 Cor. 6. 9-11.

may ask, what religion except Christianity could have been mixed up with such persecutions, and yet have escaped the odium of mankind? Christianity has done so, because men have seen that it was not the religion itself, but its false friends who were responsible for the persecutions. The important fact is that the New Testament, unlike the Koran, does not authorise, still less command, the employment of force in gaining converts.

We now turn to another aspect of the subject. Not only has Christianity done much good in the past, but it is doing much good at the present. This also is beyond dispute; everyone can verify the fact for himself. By far the greater part of all the work which is being done for the amelioration of the masses is from avowedly Christian motives. Thousands of men and women spend their lives in self-sacrifice among the poor and sick solely for the sake of Christ. Of course, it may be said that all this is folly, and that we ought to try to benefit our fellow-men for their own sake, or for the sake of the State. But, whether folly or not, the fact remains. The vast majority of those who visit the poor and sick do not do so for the sake of the State, or even mainly for the sake of the poor themselves, but from avowedly Christian motives. They believe that Christ loves these poor, and therefore they love them too, and willingly spend their lives in trying to help them.

And it is also a fact that this enormous *attractive power* which Christ exercises over the hearts of men is unique in history. Can we imagine anyone spending

his life in visiting the sick in some large town, and saying that he is doing it for the love of David, or of Plato, or of Mahomet? And yet all through the civilised world thousands are doing it for the love of Christ. And this influence, be it observed, is not like that of other great men, local and temporary, but world-wide and permanent. Christ is thus not only as we saw in the last chapter the *holiest* of men, but the *mightiest* of men also; the Man in short who has most influenced mankind. And with trifling exceptions, few will dispute that this influence has been wholly for good. So that the belief in the God Incarnate has done more to regenerate the world, than the belief in the God of Nature, or the God of the Jews, or any other religion past or present. And therefore, judged by its fruits, Christianity is a religion which might very reasonably have had a divine origin.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that though Christianity has done so much good, it has not entirely reformed the world; and its failure to do this, after trying for so many centuries, is thought by some to be adverse to its claims. But others think that its partial success and partial failure are just what we should expect if it were true. And what is more to the point, this seems to have been expected by its Founder, for He always implied that the good and the evil—the wheat and the tares—were to be mixed together until the end of the world. Moreover, reforming this world is not the sole object of Christianity. Its chief purpose is to prepare men for another world; and therefore, until we know the condition of its

adherents in the future state, we cannot say how far it has been successful. While as to its so-called failure, this has been entirely due to the inconsistency of its adherents. If all men were Christians, and all Christians lived up to the religion they professed, there would be little to complain of even in this imperfect world.

On the whole, then, the *effect* of Christianity is distinctly in its favour. It has done much good, and will probably do more as time goes on ; though it has not entirely reformed the world, and probably never will. But the good it has done is an actual fact which cannot be disputed, while the counter-argument that it ought to have done more good is at least open to doubt.

(3.) *Its prospects in the future.*

Lastly, the spread of Christianity seems likely to continue, and some day we may expect to see it universally professed in the world, as it is in Western Europe at the present time, though, of course, there will always be individuals who dissent from it. The reasons for this confident hope are, that, speaking broadly, Christian nations alone are extending their influence. If, as is sometimes said, Christianity only rules in three continents out of five (Europe, America, and Australia), it is equally true that the future of the world seems to depend on these continents alone.

And to this must be added the fact that Christian missions are now being revived to an enormous extent, and, though they are not always successful, yet, taken together, they secure a good many converts. More-

over, there is no other side to this argument. It is not that Christianity is being adopted in some countries and renounced in others. The gains, whether great or small, are all *net profits*. With one exception, there is not a single instance for many centuries of a nation or tribe which once adopted Christianity changing its religion to anything else. And the exception, that of France at the time of the Revolution, strikingly proves the rule ; for the change could not be maintained, and in a few years Christianity reasserted itself throughout the country.

But an important objection has now to be examined. It is said that in Christian countries an increasingly large number of men either openly reject Christianity or give it a mere nominal approval. This may be called the objection from the spread of *Rationalism*, and it is an important one, because it is an attempt to meet Christianity with its own weapons, an appeal to reason. Of course it must be remembered that a great deal of the infidelity of the present day is not caused by reasoning at all, but by the want of it ; and it is hopeless to argue against this. For how can men be convinced of Christianity or anything else if they will not take the trouble to examine its claims ?

But putting aside this class, for whom the present *Essay* is obviously not intended, there are still many men who may fairly be called Rationalists—men, that is, who have studied *both* sides of the subject, and whose reasoning leads them to reject Christianity. They admit that there is evidence in its favour, but they say that it is far from convincing. And it is



believed by many that Rationalism is spreading at the present day, and will ultimately become common among thoughtful men. Now, of course, the whole of this *Essay* is really an attempt to meet this objection, and to show that, when fully considered, the arguments in favour of Christianity far outweigh those against it. But three additional remarks may be made here.

The first is, that this is no *new* difficulty. Rationalism has existed ever since the Middle Ages, and it was most aggressive and most confident in the eighteenth century, as a single quotation will show. Bishop Butler in the preface to his *Analogy of Religion*, 1736, says, 'It has come, I know not how, to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world.' It is now nearly two centuries since these words were written, and yet Christianity is still flourishing! And therefore, as all previous attacks have proved futile, there is no reason to believe that the present one will be more successful.

Secondly, these continued assaults on Christianity afford in one respect additional evidence in its favour; for they show, as nothing but repeated attacks could show, its *indestructibility*. Had Christianity never been assailed, its strength would never have been apparent;

but now we know that, try as men will for centuries, they cannot get rid of this religion.

Lastly, it must be remembered that Rationalism is all destructive and not constructive. It can show many reasons for *not* believing in Christianity, but it can give the world nothing which can in any way take its place. It can give no satisfactory solution of the great problems of life. Why does man exist at all? Why has he got free will? What is the meaning of sin? Is there any forgiveness for sin? What is the meaning of death? Is there any life beyond death? Is there a judgment? Can we dare to face it? Shall we recognise those whom we have loved on earth? In short, what is man's destiny here and hereafter? These are the questions which always have interested, and always will interest, mankind. Rationalists may say that the Christian answer to them is incorrect; but they can offer no other which is worth a moment's consideration.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

Before concluding this chapter one other point of some importance has to be noticed. It is that the early history of Christianity, with its continual triumph amidst continual persecution, seems to have been fore-known to its Founder, as well as His own marvellous influence in the world.

These *prophecies* of Christ concerning His own religion are certainly very striking. We find, on the one hand, a most absolute conviction as to the triumph of His Church, and that its enemies would never prevail against it. And on the other, an equally certain con-

viction as to the constant sufferings of its members, who were to expect life-long persecution and the universal hatred of mankind.<sup>1</sup> And yet these strange prophecies of continual success amidst continual suffering were for three centuries as strangely fulfilled.

Moreover, Christ's assertions regarding His own influence in the world are equally remarkable. We will give but two examples.<sup>2</sup> He said, *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself.* He was lifted up on the cross, and, however strange we may think it, millions of men have in consequence been drawn to Him with passionate devotion. Again, He said, *I am the light of the world.* And now, after eighteen centuries, both friends and foes admit that His is the teaching which has illuminated and regenerated mankind. Had he been a mere Jewish peasant, the utterance of such prophecies as these seems almost as incredible as their fulfilment. But what shall we say when they were both uttered and fulfilled? Have we not here an argument in favour of Christianity, the strength of which it is hard to estimate? Nor can we get out of the difficulty by denying the authenticity of the passages; for they would be quite as remarkable if invented by an evangelist as if uttered by Christ Himself.

We may now sum up this chapter on the *History of Christianity*. We have considered the apparent preparation for this religion, its early triumphs, and its subsequent history. Each of these is, strictly speaking, unique, and each is inexplicable on purely

<sup>1</sup> E.g., Matt. 10. 17, 22; 16. 18.

<sup>2</sup> John 8. 12; 12. 32.

natural grounds. But undoubtedly the most important is the marvellous success of Christianity at first, in spite of the great difficulties it had to encounter ; and, as we have seen, all natural explanations of *this* fail hopelessly.

The historical argument, then, leads us back to *miracles* ; for every other explanation of the first triumph of Christianity is found to be inadequate. While, on the other hand, the establishment of the Christian religion is precisely such an event as we should expect if the miracles were true. And it need hardly be added that true miracles, not false ones, are required to bear such a superstructure. The most holy and the most powerful religion the world has ever seen cannot have been founded on falsehood or fable. In other words, if we deny that the Christian miracles occurred, and take from Christ all that is superhuman, we cannot imagine Him as the Founder of Christianity. There would be an obvious disproportion between cause and effect. While, as a matter of fact, it has *not* been a natural Christ, but a supernatural Christ—the *Christ of the Gospels*—Who has won the heart of mankind, and conquered the world. We seem thus forced to the conclusion that the only thing which can account for the history of Christianity is its *truth*. Anyhow, it is plain that its *history* affords a strong additional argument in its favour.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THAT ON THE WHOLE THE OTHER EVIDENCE SUPPORTS THIS CONCLUSION.

Miscellaneous arguments for and against Christianity.

(A.) CHRISTIANITY AND THE BIBLE.

The existence of slight errors in the Bible cannot be disputed ; but they are quite unimportant, since the writers make no claim to Verbal Inspiration.

(B.) CHRISTIANITY AND PRAYER.

Its universality. There are, however, three objections. It is said to be—

- (1.) Scientifically incredible, as inconsistent with the uniformity of nature.
- (2.) Morally wrong, as impugning the power, wisdom, and goodness of God.
- (3.) Practically useless, as shown by statistics ; but none of these can be maintained.

(C.) CHRISTIANITY AND HUMAN NATURE.

It is adapted to human nature ; for it meets to a great extent the inherent cravings of mankind, especially in regard to sorrow and sin, death and eternity. The objection as to selfishness.

(D.) CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS.

Their comparative study ; the Krishna myth ; the Horus myth ; the uniqueness of Christianity. The objection that religion depends on race and climate.

We propose in this chapter to consider some of the remaining arguments for and against Christianity.

Fortunately, there are only four of anything like sufficient importance to appreciably affect the general conclusion. These arise from the relation of Christianity to the Bible, to prayer, to human nature, and to other religions ; and we will examine each in turn.

(A.) CHRISTIANITY AND THE BIBLE.

Now it is only natural that a book like the Bible, treating of such a variety of subjects, and scattered through so many centuries, should be liable to much criticism on the one hand, and have much to be said in its favour on the other. A good deal of the evidence in its favour we have already considered. The Pentateuch and the Four Gospels, for instance, we have discussed at length and have shown that they bear every sign of being truthfully written. So again the Jewish and Christian Prophecies bear evidence of having been divinely revealed. While in other cases modern science has shown the superhuman knowledge of the writers. This is specially so in regard to the origin of the world described in Gen. 1., and it is equally true as to the end of the world, foretold by St. Peter, which is that it will be destroyed by *fire*, the elements melting with the fervent heat.<sup>1</sup> Everyone now admits that it is true, for our planet is gradually getting nearer the sun, and when it falls in, the elements, rocks, and all, will of course melt and probably vaporize with the intense heat. But how did St. Peter know all this ? Why should he have thought that the earth was to come to an end at all ? Why should he have thought that the end was to be brought about by fire ?

<sup>1</sup> 2 Peter 3. 10-12.

And what experience could he have had of any heat sufficient to destroy it ?

But we have now to turn to the other side, and inquire what arguments there are *against* the Bible. There is only one of any importance, which has not been already dealt with. It is that several slight mistakes and discrepancies exist in the Bible (which we have already admitted in Chapters XI. and XV.) ; and yet it is essential for the Christian religion that the whole Book should be strictly true, since its authors were verbally *inspired*. But this latter point is disputed.

To prevent confusion, we must carefully distinguish between *Revelation* and *Inspiration*. By the former is meant, as said in Chapter VI., any superhuman knowledge directly imparted by God to man ; and by the latter, any superhuman guidance vouchsafed to man in recording this or anything else. And if such guidance extends to the very words used, thus securing the writer against any mistake, however trivial, it is called *verbal* inspiration. Is, then, such inspiration in any way essential to Christianity ? Certainly not ; for the Three Creeds do not say a word about inspiration from beginning to end, and even the writers of the Bible themselves do not assert that they were *verbally* inspired, though, as this is sometimes disputed, we will briefly examine it.

And first as to the *Old Testament*. The writers of course claim divine authority for their *revelations*, but they make no claim whatever to inspiration. There are, however, several passages in the New Testament

which might be thought to imply that the Old was verbally inspired, but none of them are at all conclusive.<sup>1</sup> The two strongest are where the Psalms are quoted as if they were written by God. But the argument does not depend on the individual words, but on the teaching. And if the Psalms were written under God's direction, they might be thus quoted, without meaning that the literal words were inspired. And what makes this a probable view is that the New Testament writers frequently quote the Old Testament inaccurately, which they could hardly have done, had they thought it verbally inspired. In a few cases, it is true, particular words are emphasised, but then they are always the *words of God*, reported in the Old Testament. And hence if they were accurately reported, which they might be, and probably would be, quite apart from inspiration, they were well worthy of this stress.

Secondly, as to the *New Testament*. We must, as before, set aside all passages referring to revelations. And when this is done, though there remains abundant evidence that the writers set forth their teaching as Divine, in only one passage does it seem to include the literal words used. This is where St. Paul says that he speaks 'not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth.'<sup>2</sup> And even here the inference is doubtful; for elsewhere in this argument we find the *word of the cross*, meaning the doctrine of the cross, not the actual noun. On the other hand St. Paul admits in one place that he is making a

<sup>1</sup> Heb. 1. 5-12; 3. 7; Gal. 3. 16; 2 Tim. 3. 16; 2 Peter 1. 21.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 2. 13; 1. 18.



mistake, for he afterwards corrects it ; while in another he distinctly says that he is speaking 'not after the Lord, but as in foolishness.'<sup>1</sup> And though this latter passage implies inspiration of some kind elsewhere, it need not be verbal inspiration, nor need it extend to secular subjects. Two other texts are sometimes quoted as *promising* verbal inspiration.<sup>2</sup> But one of them refers to a spoken defence before hostile tribunals, and not to writings at all ; while the other is at least satisfied if the Apostles were so reminded of what Christ said as to set forth His teaching aright, without necessarily remembering the exact words He used on every occasion.

From all this it follows that while the Biblical writers claim Divine authority for their *religious teaching*, they do not claim to be verbally inspired. And therefore slight historical or other errors in the Bible are no valid argument against Christianity. The Book, like many others, may be substantially true, without being infallible. It is not, of course, meant that the Bible is not inspired at all. The Church has always believed it to be so, and there are strong reasons for this belief. But the question is one for Christians only, it does not concern unbelievers in Christianity, and is not essential to the religion or to its proofs. If the Bible is as trustworthy a record of the facts it relates as any ordinary History of England, that is sufficient, indeed far more than sufficient, to prove Christianity without any inspiration at all.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 1. 14-16 ; 2 Cor. 11. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 10. 19 ; John 14. 26.

## (B.) CHRISTIANITY AND PRAYER.

We next come to the subject of Prayer. Now the Christian, in common with most other religions, asserts the value of prayer, not only for obtaining what are called spiritual blessings, but also as a means of influencing natural events. And yet prayer with such an object is said by many to be scientifically *incredible*, morally *wrong*, and practically *useless*. So we will first glance at the universality of the custom, and then consider these objections in turn.

Now, prayer of some kind is, and always has been, the universal rule in almost every religion. It is practically co-extensive with the human race. No one can point to its inventor, no one can point to a time when men did not pray. Missionaries have not to teach savages to pray, but merely to *Whom* to pray. In short, prayer in the germ seems universal, just as the moral sense of right and wrong, though of course each is capable of being trained and perfected. And its intrinsic vitality is such that it has everywhere stood its ground for thousands of years. Nor is it in any way like an animal's cry of pain when hurt, which, though universal, means nothing ; for this of course resembles a man's cry of pain, and has no connection with prayer whatever.

If, then, prayer is a delusion, it is a very remarkable one, especially as in most ancient religions prayer was made to false gods who could not answer it ; and yet, in spite of every failure, the belief in prayer has always remained. Men have always preferred to think that the failure was due to their own unworthiness, rather

than disbelieve in a God Who answers prayer. And this *universality* of the custom is alone a strong argument in its favour ; for it seems most unlikely that God should have implanted in mankind a universal habit of asking if He never intended to answer. We pass on now to the objections.

(1.) *Scientific objection.*

In the first place, it is said that answers to prayer are scientifically *incredible*, since they would involve God's interfering with the course of nature, or, in popular language, working miracles. The most probable explanation is, that they are only a particular class of *superhuman coincidences* (see Chapter VII.). According to this theory, God, knowing beforehand that the prayer would be offered, arranged beforehand to answer it. Thus the prayer was not a direct cause of the event which fulfilled it, but it might still have been an indirect cause. For had the man not prayed, God, foreknowing this, might have arranged for the corresponding event not to have happened. Of course, at the time when the prayer was offered, the event might have been, and probably was, a natural consequence of previous events, and so could not have been avoided except by some special action on God's part. Yet, as just shown, the prayer might still have been indirectly the cause of its own fulfilment.\*

And the same argument applies even to the most extreme case, when the prayer is made after the event. Suppose, for instance, a man heard of the loss of a ship in which his son was travelling, and prayed for his safety. That safety, as far as the shipwreck was con-

\*cf. Isaiah 65. 24.

cerned, must have been decided before the father prayed. But yet, as everything was foreknown to God, his subsequent prayer might not have been useless ; since, if God had not known that the father would have prayed, He might not have brought about the son's safety.

Of course, it may be said that this is making the cause come after the effect, and is therefore absurd. No doubt it would be so if merely physical forces were involved ; but when we are dealing with personal beings, able to foresee and to act accordingly, there is nothing impossible in a cause happening after what was in a certain sense its effect. For instance, my going for a holiday next week may be the cause of my working hard this week ; though, strictly speaking, it is my foreknowledge of the intended holiday, and some action I took in consequence, that produced the effect. So in the case before us. Strictly speaking, it is God's *foreknowledge* that the prayer would be offered, and some action He took in consequence, which produced the effect ; but for all practical purposes this is the same as if the prayer produced it. And therefore this theory does not detract from the value and importance of prayer any more than God's foreknowledge in other respects makes human conduct of no importance. In every case God foreknows the result, not in spite of, but because He also foreknows, the man's conduct on which it depends.

From this it is plain that answers to prayer may, without losing their significance, be regarded as super-human coincidences ; and, if so, they do not involve

any interference with the ordinary course of nature, and all scientific difficulties are at an end.

(2.) *Moral objection.*

Next as to the moral difficulties. Prayer, it is said, is morally *wrong*, since it impugns each of the three great attributes of the Deity. It impugns His *Power*, by implying that He is under the partial control of men; His *Wisdom*, by implying that He has to be informed of what we want; and His *Goodness*, by implying that He cannot be trusted to act for the best without our interference.

And first, as to God's *Power*. No one who prays supposes that the Deity is under the control of his prayers, but merely that He may freely choose to be influenced by them. Insignificant as man is in comparison with his Maker, we have already shown that God takes an interest in his welfare. And admitting this, there is nothing improbable in His being influenced by a man's prayer. Nor is this in any way trying to persuade the Deity to change His Will, since everything was foreknown to Him; and therefore the prayer, with all it involved, may have been part of His Will from all eternity.

Secondly, as to God's *Wisdom*. No one who prays supposes that prayer is for the information of the Deity, or for arousing His sympathy, but merely that it is the way which He has Himself chosen for us to show our trust in Him. Nor is there anything unlikely in this; for God is a Personal Being possessing Free Will, and therefore an appeal to this Free Will cannot be thought unfitting. It shows our belief in His

Personality, and is a strong help to us in trying to realise it.

Thirdly, as to God's *Goodness*. As a matter of fact, God does not wait for us to pray to send most of His blessings. The vast majority of them come without our co-operation, but a few of them are said to be conditional on our praying. And this is quite consistent with perfect goodness. Human analogy seems decisive on the point. A father may know what his child wants, may be quite willing to supply that want, and may yet choose to wait till the child asks him. And why? Simply because supplying his wants is not the whole object the father has in view. He also wishes to train the child's character; to teach him to rely upon and trust his father, and to develop his confidence and gratitude. And all this would be obviously unattainable if the father supplied his wants as a machine would do; in which case the child might perhaps forget that his father was not a machine.

Now, for all we know, precisely the same may be the case with regard to prayer. God may wish not only to supply man's wants, but also to train and develop his character. Indeed, as shown in Chapter V., the existence of evil seems to force us to this very conclusion. And if so, it is out of the question to say that His not bestowing some blessings till they are asked for is incompatible with perfect goodness. It may be, and probably is, a very sign of that goodness. For, as already said, God's goodness does not consist of simple beneficence, but also of righteousness.

And, as a general rule, it certainly seems right that those who believe in God and take the trouble to ask for His blessings should be the ones to receive them. The objection, then, that prayer is morally wrong cannot be maintained from any point of view.

It is, however, only fair to add that a certain class of prayers would be wrong. We have no right to pray for *miracles*, e.g., for water to run uphill, or for a dead man to come to life again; though we have a right to pray for any ordinary event, such as rain or recovery from sickness. The reason for this distinction is obvious. A miracle is, in popular language, something contrary to the order of nature; and as the order of nature is merely the Will of Him who ordered nature, it would be contrary to God's Will. And we cannot ask God to act contrary to what we believe to be His Will.

Of course, it may be said that to pray for rain when otherwise it would not have rained really involves a miracle, for it is asking God to interfere with the ordinary course of nature. But here everything depends on the saving clause *when otherwise it would not have rained*. If we knew this for certain, it would be wrong to pray for rain: not knowing it for certain, it is not wrong. And as we do know for certain that water will not run uphill without a miracle, it is always wrong to pray for that. In the same way we may pray for fruitful crops, because it is plainly God's Will that mankind should be nourished; but we may not pray to be able to live without food, since this is plainly not God's Will. Of course, in the Bible miracles

were sometimes prayed for, but only by persons who acted under Divine guidance ; and this affords no argument for our doing so.

(3.) *Practical objection.*

Lastly, it is said, even admitting that prayers might be answered, yet we have abundant evidence that they never are ; so that prayer at the present day is *useless*. But there are some obvious difficulties here ; for no one asserts that *all* prayers are answered. Various conditions have to be fulfilled, many of which apply equally to prayers to an earthly ruler. For instance, a person must not only believe in God, but also in His power and willingness to answer prayers ; and the answer must be of such a kind that he may legitimately pray for it. Moreover, he must be trying to lead such a life as God wishes him to lead, and also be honestly exerting himself to gain the required end ; for prayer cannot be looked upon as a substitute for work.

And this prevents our deciding the question by *experiment*, as is sometimes urged. Why not, it is said, settle the question once for all by a test case ? But this is impossible, since in the vast majority of cases we cannot say whether these conditions are fulfilled or not ; and even if we could, it would still be impracticable. For prayer is the earnest entreaty that God would grant something we earnestly desire ; and if used as an experiment, it ceases to be genuine prayer altogether. And even an earthly ruler would have too much self-respect to answer prayers made in such a spirit.



But it is further urged that though we cannot decide by experiment, we can by *observation*. But the facts adduced can be explained on either theory. Suppose, for instance, an epidemic breaks out, and prayer is at once made that it may cease ; but instead of ceasing, it continues for a week, and kills a hundred persons. How do we know that but for the prayers it might not have continued for a month, and killed a thousand persons? And the same argument applies in other cases.

Against these various objections must be weighed the fact that an immense number of men of many ages and countries, and of undoubted intelligence and integrity, have asserted that their prayers have been answered ; and the cumulative value of this evidence is very great. While of course, to those who possess it, the conviction that certain events happened, not accidentally, as we should say, but in answer to some prayer, is absolutely convincing. It resembles in this respect the conviction that a man's acts are determined by his free will, and not of necessity.

Having now decided that there is nothing *incredible* in prayers being answered, that they are not *wrong*, while many of those who ought to know best assert that they are not *useless*, it is plain that no argument against the Jewish religion can be sustained on this subject. And that is the question we are considering. We are not appealing to answers to prayer as having any evidential value, which in the vast majority of cases they have not, but merely showing that, according to both science and experience, the subject is an open one.

## (C.) CHRISTIANITY AND HUMAN NATURE.

The next subject we have to consider is a very important one, the *adaptation* of Christianity to human nature. To begin with, it is undeniable that Christianity appeals very strongly to some at least among every class of men. The poor value it as much as the rich, and the ignorant as much as the learned ; children can partly understand it, and philosophers can do no more. And this is not only the case at the present time, but it has been so among all the changing conditions of society for eighteen centuries.

Now, when we inquire into the reason of this powerful hold which Christianity has on so many men, we find it is because it meets certain inherent cravings in human nature. Many of these, such as man's belief in prayer, and his sense of responsibility, are of course satisfied by any form of Theism. So also is his idea of justice, which requires virtue and vice to be suitably rewarded hereafter, since they are not here. But man's nature is very complex, and has many other cravings besides these ; and yet Christianity seems to satisfy it everywhere. In the first place, it assures us of what we all wish to know, that God takes an interest in us men. This is of course a truth of Natural Religion, but it is a truth which the progress of science, especially astronomy, makes it increasingly difficult to believe. There are, as we have seen, several considerations, which lessen the difficulty (Chap. V.), but Christianity, if once accepted, removes it altogether. For if the Ruler of the Universe chose to become incarnate on this planet, then all thought of our insignificance is at

an end. And when we contemplate the distant stars, we are overwhelmed with a sense, not of the littleness of man, but of the greatness of the love of God, Who for our sakes was pleased to become Man Himself.

We will now consider four points in detail, and select *Sorrow* and *Sin*, *Death* and *Eternity*. The three first, and possibly the fourth, all have to be faced; they are the common heritage of all mankind. And while Rationalism does not help man to face any of them, and mere Theism leaves much in uncertainty, Christianity meets the needs of mankind throughout, or at all events far better than any other religion.

And first, as to *Sorrow*. It is indisputable that in this life man has to bear a great deal of sorrow and suffering; and it is also indisputable that when in sorrow he instinctively longs for someone who can both sympathise with him and help him. An impersonal God can, of course, do neither; indeed, we might as well go for comfort to the force of gravity. And though a personal God can help us, we do not feel sure that He can sympathise with us. On the other hand, fellow-men can sympathise, but they cannot always help. In Christ alone we have a Being Who seems to entirely satisfy human nature; for being Man, He can sympathise with all human sorrow, and being God, He can alleviate it. So here Christianity supplies a universal want. Of course, the doctrine of the *Incarnation* also satisfies mankind in other respects, especially in presenting him with a worthy Object for his affections, and with a perfect Example; but

these points have been already touched upon in Chapter XIII.

And next, as to *Sin*. Here again the facts are practically undisputed. Man's sense of sin is universal, so also is his belief in the justice of God ; and therefore in all ages man has longed for some means of propitiating the Deity. The widespread custom of sacrifice is a conclusive proof of this. It shows both man's inherent sense of guilt and also his inherent sense of the need of expiation. And yet, wherever Christianity has been accepted, such sacrifices have been abandoned. It is scarcely necessary to point out the reason for this. The Christian doctrine of the *Atonement* entirely satisfies these cravings of mankind. It admits the fact of sin ; it provides a sufficient Sacrifice for sin, which man could never provide of himself, and it thus assures him of complete forgiveness. And yet, as shown in Chapter XIII., it does all this without in any way minimising the guilt of sin, or allowing man to sin on with impunity, but rather by magnifying it to an extent which no other religion has done, since it shows that it required an Infinite Sacrifice, that of God Himself, to ensure its forgiveness. Moreover, Christianity shows that sin is not a necessity in human nature ; for it alone of all religions can point to One Who, though tempted as we are, was yet without sin. And Christians assert, and they surely ought to know best, that this example of Christ is a strong factor in enabling them to resist sin.

Next, as to *Death*. Here again the facts are undisputed. Few persons like to contemplate their own

death, and yet it is the one event to which we may look forward with certainty. But is there a life after death? Most men long for it, and most religions have tried to satisfy this longing in one way or another, but only with partial success. The higher nature of man revolts against any mere material or sensual heaven such as Mahomet imagined, a sort of continuation of the so-called pleasures of this life without its pains. On the other hand, a purely spiritual heaven does not satisfy mankind either; for a man longs to know that he will be able to recognise again those whom he has loved on earth; and there must always be some doubt as to recognising disembodied spirits. And here again the Christian doctrine of the *Resurrection of the Body* alone satisfies the cravings of mankind; for all doubt is now at an end. The risen body will define and localise man's spirit then, just as the natural body does now; and though there will be a great change, it will not prevent recognition. Even the Apostles, though unprepared for it, and though themselves unaware of what a risen body was like, were soon able to recognise Christ after His Resurrection.

And lastly, as to *Eternity*. Christianity, it is true, can say little here, but that little is full of hope. It opens up boundless possibilities, far more than any form of mere Theism. For by the Incarnation human nature has been united to the Divine, and thus raised to a position second only to that of God Himself. No destiny, then, that can be imagined is too great for man. Created or evolved (it matters not which) in the image of the Triune God, with a supernatural freedom

of choice, his nature united to God's by the Incarnation, his sins forgiven through the Atonement, his body purified and spiritualised at its Resurrection—surely the end of all this cannot be any mere monotonous existence, but rather one of ceaseless joy and activity. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard' what those joys are, but doubtless they will be as far above anything that we can imagine as the life of a butterfly is above the imagination of a chrysalis.

Now the conclusion to be drawn from all this is quite plain. Christianity is so adapted to man's nature that it probably came from the Author of man's nature ; just as if a complicated key fits a complicated lock, it was probably made by the locksmith. Or, to put the same conclusion in other words, Christ satisfies the whole nature of man because He is its Creator. And considering that Christianity claims to be meant for all mankind, and that the vast majority of men have neither time nor ability to investigate its proofs, the fact of its thus appealing direct to human nature is certainly a strong argument in its favour ; though, like all arguments depending on a man's own consciousness, it is not well suited for controversy. Suffice it to say, that many men, who are quite able to appreciate the force of *other* arguments in favour of Christianity, such as we have examined in this Essay, yet assert that to them this is an even stronger proof.

But we must now consider an objection. It is, that Christianity is really a *selfish* religion, looking only for future rewards, and teaching men to follow virtue, not for virtue's sake, but solely with a view to their own

advantage here or hereafter. But this is an entire mistake, though a very common one. The Christian's motive, in endeavouring to lead such a life as God wishes him to lead, is simply *love*. He has, as already said, an overwhelming sense of God's love to him. And though, doubtless, leading a good life will bring with it some future reward, yet this is not the true motive for leading it. Compare the case of a young child endeavouring to please his parents simply because he loves them. It would be unjust to call this selfishness, though it may be quite true that the parents would do much for the child later on in life, which they would not have done had the child never shown them any affection.

Or again to take another example, if a young man puts aside a certain amount of his earnings for his old age, when he will be unable to work, though he may do this expressly for his own benefit, it is scarcely selfishness. It would be better described as thrift, and is worthy of all praise. Again, for a man to strive to subdue his evil passions is certainly not selfishness, though it is equally certain that it will be to his own advantage. *Selfishness* is having regard to one's own advantage at the expense of that of other people. But any idea of this kind is quite inapplicable to a Christian's striving after his own salvation. The *great ambition*, as it is called, is one which all may entertain, all may work for, and all may realise.

Still, it may be urged, is not the hope of future reward meant to influence men at all? No doubt it is to some extent. But what then? Hope, however

we may explain it, is a powerful fact in human nature, and therefore Christianity, by partly appealing to this motive, does but show how fully adapted it is to human nature. It provides the highest motive of *love* for those able to appreciate it ; the lower motive of *hope* of future reward for the many who would not be reached by the former ; and, it may be added, the still lower motive of *fear* of future punishment for those who could not be otherwise influenced. This objection, then, as to selfishness is quite untenable.

(D.) CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS.

We have lastly to consider the relation in which Christianity stands to other religions ; and this is the more important because an argument said to be adverse to Christianity is derived from their *comparative study*. In far more ancient religions, it is alleged, we find similar doctrines to those of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement. These are, in fact, mere revivals of doctrines once common in various countries : and this is fatal to the claim of Christianity to be the one and only true Religion.

But as to the doctrine of the *Trinity*, it is really unique. Many other religions had three gods, a kind of triad ; but this was merely a form of Polytheism. And though these gods were often addressed indiscriminately by the same titles, there does not appear to have been anything resembling the Christian idea of the Triune God.

Next, as to the *Incarnation*. This is said to resemble similar doctrines of other ancient religions, more especially the incarnation of *Krishna*, since in this case,



besides the main fact of Krishna being believed to be an incarnation of the supreme god Vishnu, he is recorded to have worked various miracles similar to those of Christ, and to have claimed an equally absolute devotion from his followers. Many critics, however, place these legends some centuries later than the Christian era; and considering the early spread of Christianity in India, and the similarity in name between Krishna and Christ, they may be only distorted versions of the Gospel story.

But even admitting that they are earlier than Christianity, it seems almost impossible for them to have influenced it. Not only is there the geographical difficulty—India being many hundreds of miles from Palestine, and with little communication between them—but there is a still greater moral difficulty. For the miracles and occasional lofty teaching of Krishna are associated all along with a most immoral character. In the Gospels, on the other hand, they occur among suitable antecedents and suitable consequents; they form perfect parts of a perfect whole. A single example will illustrate this difference. In the Purana, Krishna is related to have healed a deformed woman, almost identical with the story in Luke 13. But it is added he made her beautiful as well as whole, and subsequently spent the night with her in immorality. Few will contend that this was the origin of the Gospel story; and it is but one instance out of many.<sup>1</sup>

Any resemblance, then, there may be between the

<sup>1</sup> Transactions of Victoria Institute, vol. xxi., p. 169.

Incarnation of Krishna and that of Christ cannot be due to Christianity having borrowed from the earlier religion. A far better explanation is to be found in the fact that man has almost always believed that God takes an interest in his welfare. And this inherent belief has led him to imagine an incarnation, attended of course by various miracles of healing, though often mixed up with immoral ideas, from which the Christian doctrine is entirely free.

Lastly, as to the doctrine of the *Atonement*, especially the mediatorial character of Christ. This also is said to resemble far more ancient legends. Thus in Babylonia there was the supreme god Ea and his son Merodach, who was the mediator between God and man, and to whom men offered their prayers, which he presented to his father. But perhaps the most striking resemblance is with the *Horus* myth of ancient Egypt.

Now, although this doctrine, like most others in the Egyptian religion, is extremely confused, the leading idea seems to have been that Horus was the only son of the supreme god Osiris, and came on earth long ago, before the time of man. He was always looked upon as the champion of right against wrong, and nothing but lofty and noble actions are ascribed to him. With regard to mankind, he became their deliverer and justifier. The soul after death was imagined to pass through a sort of Purgatory, where various dangers were overcome by the help of Horus, and finally, when judged before Osiris, he interceded for the faithful soul and ensured its salvation. And what makes the resemblance to Christianity all the more striking are

the titles ascribed to Horus. Thus he is called the *Only Begotten Son of God*, the *Son of the Eternal Father* (Osiris), the *Word of God*, and the *Son of a Virgin* (Isis). But the titles of Horus are almost infinite in number, and very contradictory, and therefore, while some of them bear such a striking resemblance to those of Christ, others do not; while many of them are also applied to the other gods.<sup>1</sup>

But still this does not affect the mediatorial character of Horus, which undoubtedly bears a strong resemblance to that of Christ. But what is the cause of this similarity? Not surely that the Christian doctrine was founded on that of Horus. The whole origin of Christianity negatives such a view. As in the previous case, there is another and far better solution. For what was the origin of the Egyptian doctrine itself? It was simply this. The ancient Egyptians were deeply impressed with a sense of the *justice* of God; the *immortality* of man; his *responsibility*, involving a future judgment; and his *sinfulness*, which naturally led him to long for some mediator with the just Judge he would have to face hereafter. Given these four ideas—and they are all rudimentary principles of Natural Theology—and Horus was merely an imaginary being, whom the Egyptians invented to satisfy them. And therefore, if these ideas are true, and if Christianity is the true religion which really does satisfy them, that Horus should to some extent resemble Christ was inevitable. Thus, to put it shortly, the Horus myth only proves how deeply rooted in the human

<sup>1</sup> Transactions of Victoria Institute, vol. xii., pp. 50, 52.

mind is the idea of a mediator between God and man.

Now what general conclusion can be drawn from all this? It is scarcely conceivable that the early Christians founded their Religion upon a careful piecing together of fables from India, Egypt, and elsewhere. And it must be remembered, the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Atonement were not slowly evolved, but were essential features in Christianity from the very first. They are both strongly emphasised in the admittedly genuine Epistles of St. Paul. These earlier fables, then, can only be looked upon as accidental or designed foreshadowings of Christianity. In the former case, they prove nothing either way; in the latter, they afford additional evidence in its favour; for then we see that 'previous religions, like previous philosophies, were merely a preparation for the Gospel.'

Moreover, while admitting these resemblances, we must not forget the *uniqueness* of Christianity. For it alone of all religions seems to offer anything like an adequate solution of the great problems of life, such as we glanced at near the end of the last chapter. And these are questions which have always interested mankind, and all religions have tried to solve them, and yet the only solution worth considering is that of Christianity.

We have still one other objection to consider under this head. It is said that religion, after all, is merely a matter of *race* and *climate*, like the colour of one's skin; and that the most ardent advocate of Christianity, had he been born in Arabia or Tibet, would be just as

convinced of Mahometanism or Buddhism. And therefore, it is urged, all religions are equally true or false. But the fallacy of this objection is obvious, for it applies equally to other subjects. Take astronomy, for instance. A man living in Europe is convinced that the earth goes round the sun ; but had he lived in Tibet, he might be equally convinced that the sun goes round the earth ; and had he lived elsewhere, that the sun was a living being which had to be worshipped. But this does not show that all these theories are equally true or false. The European astronomer is convinced, and rightly so, that his theory is the only true one, and confidently looks forward to the time when it will be universally accepted. In the same way, the Christian is convinced that his Religion is the only true one, and, as shown in the last chapter, confidently looks forward to the time when it will be the only one recognised.

Moreover, this objection does not account for the *founding* of a religion at all. When Christianity was first preached, it was not a matter of race and climate for men to accept it ; and even now it is only partly true. No doubt a man who has been brought up a Christian does believe it at first because he is told to ; but it is the same with regard to other kinds of knowledge. In science, for instance, a man has often to take its principles on trust to start with, and then by gradually applying them to various phenomena, he arrives at an independent conviction of their truth. And so in regard to Christianity. Its doctrines are first received on authority ; then comes the period of

*experience*, when they are found to explain the various phenomena of life ; and lastly, the rational conviction. Take, for example, the subject of prayer. Probably most men who believe in the efficacy of prayer did so at first because they were taught it. Then came the period of experience, when they found that, as a matter of fact, their prayers were answered ; and lastly, the rational conviction. And it is the same with other subjects. This objection, then, is quite untenable.

On the whole, then, it is evident that the *comparative study* of religions, so far from being adverse to Christianity, is distinctly in its favour ; for it shows, as nothing but a comparative study could show, its striking superiority. Human nature is always the same, and in so far as other religions have satisfied human nature, they have resembled Christianity ; while, on the other hand, Christianity differs from them in being free from their various absurdities and contradictions, as well as from their tendency to degenerate, and having instead a moral character of admitted excellence, and powerful evidence by which to establish its actual truth. In short, other religions are *human*, and therefore, as man is a mixture of good and evil, they contain some good and some evil. But Christianity is *superhuman*, and therefore contains all the good they do, with much more besides, and with none of their evil. This completes a brief examination of the more important additional arguments for and against Christianity.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THAT THE THREE CREEDS ARE DEDUCIBLE FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Only three Doctrines can be disputed.

#### (A.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

In addition to the belief in God the Father, the New Testament teaches—

- (1.) The Divinity of Christ.
- (2.) The Divinity of the Holy Spirit, so that
- (3.) There are Three Divine Persons and yet but One God.

#### (B.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION.

The only part in dispute refers to the final state of the wicked.

There are three possible theories :

- (1.) Their endless misery : very strong texts in favour of this ; its difficulties considered.
- (2.) Their endless happiness : most improbable.
- (3.) Their annihilation : not perhaps unlikely in some cases. On the whole the statement of the Creed seems fully justified.

#### (C.) THE IMPORTANCE OF A RIGHT BELIEF.

This is strongly insisted on in the warning clauses of the Athanasian Creed.

- (1.) Their meaning.
- (2.) Their truthfulness : they merely repeat similar warnings in the New Testament.
- (3.) The objection as to Dogmatism considered in detail.

WE have now reached the last stage in our inquiry. We have shown in the preceding chapters that there is very strong evidence in favour of what may be called, and what we have called in a general sense, Christianity or the Christian Religion—*i.e.*, the Religion founded by Christ and taught in the New Testament. We have, lastly, to inquire, is this the Christian Religion as defined in this Essay—*i.e.*, the doctrines and statements of the *Three Creeds*? We must, therefore, examine these Creeds again, but from a totally different standpoint from that in Chapter XIII. We then considered their antecedent *credibility*; but now admitting this, and admitting that the New Testament contains a revelation from God, we are merely seeing whether the Creeds are fairly deducible from it.

And it is obvious that, while every precaution should be taken to test the credentials of an alleged messenger from God, we have often no sufficient data from which to argue as to the contents of his message. The most unlikely doctrines must therefore be at once accepted, if we are satisfied that they were revealed by God. And this greatly simplifies our inquiry, for most of the statements in the Creeds are merely copied or abridged from the New Testament, and hence they need not be discussed at all. There are, however, three doctrines in the Athanasian Creed which are sometimes said to be not contained in the New Testament. These are the doctrines of the *Trinity*; the *Resurrection*, or rather that portion of it referring to the final state of the wicked; and the importance of a *Right Belief*; and we will examine each in turn.



(A.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

Now, though there are no statements in the New Testament identical with those in the Creed, yet the latter are merely logical deductions from the former. For the New Testament asserts that, besides God the Father, there are two other Divine Persons, Christ and the Holy Spirit, and yet but one God.

(1.) *The Divinity of Christ.*

This has been already discussed in Chapter XX., where we showed that Christ claimed to be not only Superhuman, but Divine; and that this is how all His contemporaries, both friends and foes, understood Him. And the doctrine is also frequently asserted by St. Paul, and St. John, as well as being implied in some of the Jewish prophecies concerning the Messiah, so that it is clear from the Bible that Christ was truly *God*. It is none the less clear that He was truly *Man*, for He suffered hunger, thirst, weariness, and even death; and in some cases His manhood is insisted on in a way which might even be thought to conflict with His Godhead.

For instance, He said, 'I go unto the Father; for the Father is greater than I.' And 'I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.'<sup>1</sup> But both these passages clearly refer to His *human* nature alone, for it was in His human nature alone that He was ever absent from the Father. In His Divine Nature He was of course Omnipresent, and therefore already in heaven. Moreover, even here He carefully distinguishes His relationship to God from that of His

<sup>1</sup> John 14. 28; 20. 17.

disciples. Though He teaches them to say *our Father*, yet when including Himself with them, He does not here or anywhere else say *our Father*, or *our God*; but always emphasises His own peculiar position. While we may ask in regard to the first passage, would anyone but God have thought it necessary to explain that God the Father was greater than Himself?

Again St. Luke says that Christ *advanced in wisdom*,<sup>1</sup> which might be thought to disprove His Divine Omniscience. But the context shows that this also refers to His human nature alone, for we read 'He advanced in wisdom *and stature*.' Moreover, even apart from the context, if once we admit that Christ was both Divine and human, we must of course refer any particular statement to that nature to which it is applicable. And this affords the best explanation that can be given of the difficult passage where He disclaims knowledge of the Day of Judgment.<sup>2</sup> Such texts, then, do but support the statement in the Creed, that while Christ was equal to the Father in regard to His Godhead, He was inferior to the Father in regard to His Manhood. He was thus not a kind of intermediate Being, who was partly Divine and partly human, but He was wholly Divine and wholly human; or, as the Creed says, *perfect God and perfect Man*.

(2.) *The Divinity of the Holy Spirit.*

This also follows at once from the New Testament. For the Holy Spirit is called by Divine names, such as God and Lord; he is given Divine attributes, such as Eternity and Omniscience; He can be blasphemed,

<sup>1</sup> Luke 2. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 13. 32.

and He is frequently asserted to be the source of revelation.<sup>1</sup>

And yet, on the other hand, it is equally clear that He is a distinct *Person*; for, to quote a decisive text,<sup>2</sup> Christ prays the Father to send His disciples *another* Comforter when He goes away; thus showing that the Holy Spirit is a separate Person, both from the Father and the Son. And the same is apparent from many other passages, when carefully examined; for personal actions, such as teaching and guiding, are continually ascribed to Him; and the masculine pronoun is regularly used, '*He* shall teach you all things,' etc. Moreover, we are told that the Spirit *makes intercession for us*, so He must be a different Person from the Father, with Whom He intercedes; and also that He distributes certain gifts *even as He will*, so He must be distinct from these spiritual blessings, which He is able to distribute as He thinks fit.<sup>3</sup>

(3.) *Three Divine Persons and yet but one God.*

It is clear, then, from the New Testament, that the Son and the Spirit (as well as the Father) are both Persons and both Divine; and yet its whole teaching is opposed to Polytheism. On the contrary, the Unity of the Godhead is at times asserted with the utmost clearness; and that this is not done more frequently cannot be wondered at when we remember that the

<sup>1</sup> Mark 3. 29; Luke 2. 26; Acts 5. 3, 4; 28. 25; 1 Cor. 2. 10; 2 Cor. 3. 17; Heb. 9. 14.

<sup>2</sup> John 14. 16, 26.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 8. 26; 1 Cor. 12. 11. The unfortunate addition of the *Filioque Clause* to the Nicene Creed is a purely theological question, and need not be considered here.

writers were Jews, to whom Monotheism was almost an axiom. Now, the only means of reconciling all this is by the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity described in the Athanasian Creed.

And this is certainly hinted at in the New Testament itself, for the Three Persons are often closely associated together, and in such a way as to show their equality. For instance, St. Paul prays that *the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost* may be with his converts. And Christ ordained that men were to be baptized *into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*<sup>1</sup> This latter passage is alone sufficient to prove the Trinitarian doctrine, for it shows that there are *Three* distinct Persons, and that each is *divine*, for who but God could be thus associated with God? While the expression into the *name*, and not *names*, implies a unity in this Trinity.

But this is not all, for Christian converts must have received some instruction as to Who these Persons were, into whose Name they were going to be baptized. And therefore belief in the Trinity was not merely *a* doctrine of Christianity, but *the* doctrine of Christianity from the very first; the one (and as far as we know the only) doctrine, which had necessarily to be preached to all converts before even they could be baptized. And we happen to have independent evidence in the *Acts*, that this Baptismal Formula was actually used. A casual reader of this Book might think that belief in the Lord (Jesus) was the only requisite for Baptism.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. 13. 14; Matt. 28. 19.

But we are told in one place that when St. Paul was at Ephesus, he found some disciples who said they knew nothing about the Holy Ghost. He at once asks in astonishment, 'Into what then were ye *baptized*?'<sup>1</sup> Obviously, then, the baptism to which St. Paul was accustomed was into the name of the Holy Ghost, as well as into the name of the Lord Jesus. And as the Father's name could scarcely have been omitted, we have the same Three Persons; and the agreement (evidently undesigned) between this passage and the Gospel is a strong argument in favour of the accuracy of both. And yet immediately afterwards we are told that they were baptized *into the Name of the Lord Jesus*. In the same way the 'Teaching of the Twelve' once speaks of baptism as *into the Name of the Lord*; and twice as *into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*.<sup>2</sup> The former was evidently only a short way of describing baptism, while the latter represented the actual words used.

Thus, to put it shortly, according to the New Testament, there are three distinct Persons; each is God, each is Lord, each is Eternal, each is Omniscent, each performs Divine acts, into the Name of each converts are baptized, and yet there is but *One* God. This is what the Bible says, and the Creed says no more, though it says it in more scientific language.

(B.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION.

As said before, the only part of this which can be disputed refers to the final state of the wicked. The

<sup>1</sup> Acts 19. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Teaching, chaps. vii. and ix.

Creed asserts that all men are to rise again and be judged according to their *works* ; and that then, *they that have done good shall go into life everlasting ; and they that have done evil into everlasting fire*. This latter expression can scarcely be taken literally, since it is often associated in the Bible with another term,—*the worm that dieth not*—which can scarcely be literal ; and is said to have been prepared for spirits,—the evil angels—who have no bodies. But it certainly seems to imply some form of *endless misery* ; and as there are obvious difficulties in accepting such a view, we must discuss the subject at some length.

It may be pointed out at starting that we have only three theories to choose from ; for unless the wicked are to be in a continual state of change, which seems almost incredible, they must finally :—

Exist for ever in misery	= their endless misery ;
Exist for ever in happiness	= their endless happiness ;
Or not exist for ever	= their annihilation.

(1.) *The endless misery of the wicked.*

And first as to their endless misery. It would be difficult to exaggerate the strength of the texts in favour of this. We are told that the wicked, or at all events some of them, are to awake to shame and everlasting contempt ; that they are to be cast into the *eternal fire* prepared for the devil and his angels ; that they are to go away into eternal punishment ; that they are guilty of an eternal sin ; that their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, and that they are to be cast into the lake of fire, there to be tormented day and

night for ever and ever.<sup>1</sup> The fourth of these texts is perhaps the most important, since the same word is used for *eternal* punishment as for *eternal* life; and therefore, though the Greek word does not necessarily mean *endless*, it certainly seems to do so here.

With regard to the word *punishment*, it may be pointed out that man's diseases, etc., in this world are sometimes spoken of as God's punishments, though they come as a natural consequence of his own acts. And therefore his future misery, though it also is called punishment, may come in the same way, rather as an arbitrary infliction. And if it be objected that some texts, such as that referring to the 'many stripes,'<sup>2</sup> seem to point to actual punishment, it is equally clear that they point to its not being endless, for *many* is not an infinite number, so that a temporary punishment, followed by endless misery, would appear to be required by the language of Scripture.

And yet everyone must admit that there are great difficulties in accepting such a view. For the *endless misery* of the wicked seems, at all events at first sight, to be inconsistent with the great attributes of God, especially His power, His justice, and His mercy, as well as with the endless happiness of the righteous. We will consider these points in turn.

The first objection refers to God's *power*. The eternal existence of sinners against God means, it is said, a kind of eternal dualism, the never-ending antagonism between good and evil; and this is most

<sup>1</sup> Dan. 12. 2; Matt. 18. 8; 25. 41, 46; Mark 3. 29; 9. 48; Rev. 14. 11; 20. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 12. 47.

improbable. But, after all, the real mystery is that evil should ever have had a beginning, not that it should never have an end. If the free will of man or other beings is able to account for the former, may it not account for the latter also? The final state of the wicked, we must remember, is but one of a series of difficulties connected with human freedom, and by no means the greatest. That God could create a free man at all, that He could foresee how he would use his freedom, that He should allow him to use it wrongly, thus involving himself and others in misery, and that this misery should last for ever, are all to a great extent beyond our comprehension. But if we admit the first three, and they must be admitted, the last is certainly not incredible.

The second and commonest objection refers to God's *justice*. The suffering, it is said, would be out of all proportion to the offence. Man's life is brief at the most, and every sin in this world cannot deserve countless years of misery in the next. In short, a man's sin here must anyhow be finite, while endless misery, however slight, would be infinite. But very possibly, being sinners ourselves, we do not realise the magnitude of sin, more especially its far-reaching and *permanent* effect on the character of others, who in their turn may influence others, and so on indefinitely. In this way the consequences of sin may really be infinite, and if so its guilt may be infinite also.

Moreover, it is a needless assumption that endless misery is for a man's sins here only. Why may not the wicked go on sinning eternally? They must cer-



tainly have the power of doing so, for the option of acting, or at all events thinking right or wrong seems essential to free will ; and if we deny them their free will, they are no longer men but mere machines. And it even seems probable that they would do so ; for all our experience of human character is that it tends to a final permanence, of good or bad, which nothing can alter. By doing good, men become good—evil gradually loses its influence over them. And then when their character is fixed, they will be *incapable of being attracted by evil* ; and they will in consequence remain (and this without any effort or struggle on their part) for ever good, and therefore for ever happy. And similarly with regard to the wicked. By committing sin men become sinful, and when their character is fixed they may remain for ever sinful, and therefore for ever miserable.

Still, it may be said that to create men at all with the possibility of such a future before them, and depending on the short probation in this world, would be an act of injustice. But then the possibility of endless happiness is also before them, and also depending on the same short probation. And as men are given free will, with the option of choosing one or the other, there is nothing unjust in the results being so tremendous on either side. Anyhow, the fact of a long future, depending on a very short period, is in entire agreement with God's methods in nature, where, for instance, the shape of a tree for centuries is fixed during the short time it is growing.

Nor does the fact of God's foreknowledge as to how

each man would act alter the case or cause any injustice. For, as said in Chapter II., it does not interfere with man's freedom. God merely knows the use man will make of his freedom. And hence His knowing beforehand that a man will commit a murder does not make it unjust to punish him for doing so. And the same rule applies universally.

The third objection refers to God's *mercy*. Surely, it is said, God would never punish men unless there were a chance of improving them. But in answer to this we must remember that God's mercy is consistent with a great deal of misery here, which is often undeserved ; so why may it not be consistent with misery hereafter, which by hypothesis will be deserved ? And some future punishment for wicked men, who have been prosperous in this life, seems required by our sense of justice.

But the *endless misery* of the wicked (after this temporary punishment) may not be inflicted at all, but may be self-produced and come as a necessary result of their own acts, being, as before pointed out, the *consequence* rather than the punishment of sin. And there is much to be said in favour of this view, since it is the way in which God punishes men in this world. Suppose, for instance, a man repeatedly gives way to drink, he will have the natural punishment (which is really God's punishment, Who is the Author of Nature) of becoming an habitual drunkard, and very possibly miserable for the rest of his life. It is the necessary consequence of his sin ; and the extent of his misery will, as a rule, be in exact proportion to the extent of

his sin. And therefore, if a man is to suffer hereafter for other sins, we should expect this suffering to come in the same way, and to be the natural, and perhaps unavoidable, consequence of the sin itself.

Nor is it difficult to suggest how this may be. The endless misery of the wicked may be to a great extent remorse and regret at having rendered themselves unfit to share in the joys of heaven. And until we know the greatness of those joys, we cannot know the greatness of this suffering. But it will certainly be aggravated by the knowledge that it was the result of their own deliberate choice of sin, after they had been repeatedly warned of its necessary consequences. And assuming that the joys of heaven are endless, and that the existence of the wicked outside heaven is also endless, this must plainly be an endless source of misery.

The fourth and last objection refers to *man* rather than God. It is that the endless misery of the wicked would destroy the happiness of the righteous ; for how could a man enjoy heaven if he knew that his own father and mother were in endless and hopeless misery ? Of course, if we deny him his memory, and say he does not remember them, it destroys his identity, and he is to all intents and purposes a different man. I have not met with any satisfactory answer to this difficulty. But it may be pointed out that memory is never more than partial. No one remembers all the friends he has met ; and possibly persons in heaven may remember and recognise those they meet there, without being troubled by the thought of absent ones. And even if they should remember the others and know their fate,

they will certainly know their character also, and that their fate was deserved. And this may alter their feelings in regard to them, as if often does now if we discover that one of our friends has behaved in a mean and disgraceful manner. While, lastly, the joys and activities of heaven may be so engrossing as not to leave any time for useless regrets.

Reviewing all these objections, it must be admitted that the endless misery of the wicked seems improbable, but it is certainly not *incredible*. To put it shortly, our knowledge of human nature convinces us that, out of a large number of wicked men, some at all events will continue to be wicked, *i.e.*, to commit sin as long as they live. Hence, if they live for ever, they will sin for ever. And if they sin for ever, it is not only just, but perhaps inevitable, that they should be miserable for ever. And if so, the endless misery of the wicked does not reflect on either the power, justice, or mercy of God, and, as said above, is certainly not incredible.

(2) *Their endless happiness.*

We pass on now to the next theory, that of their *endless happiness*. This is often called *Universalism*, and means that, after some suitable punishment, the wicked will be finally reconciled to God, and in popular language, go to heaven. And there are several texts which are more or less in favour of this view.<sup>1</sup> The strongest is perhaps where it is said that God is the Saviour of all men, *especially* of them that believe; thus implying that He is

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Col. 1. 20; 1 Tim. 4. 10; 1 John 2. 2; Rev. 5. 13.

also, though in a lesser degree, the Saviour of those who do not believe. But how are we to reconcile these passages with the far stronger texts before alluded to? The most probable solution is that they are merely general statements, indicating the final destiny of the vast majority of mankind, but that there are exceptions to this as to most other rules. And the Creed, it should be noticed, nowhere implies that most men will be lost; it may be only a few obstinate sinners. Moreover, there is this further difficulty: what is to become of the evil angels? If we are to admit endless misery for these, why not for man? And yet the Bible gives no hint that the Devil is to be eventually reconciled to God.

There is also another great difficulty, for we cannot think that the wicked will be allowed to go on sinning in heaven, so they must finally cease to commit sin. Many will no doubt do this voluntarily, and their case presents little difficulty; but what about the remainder? If they *must* finally forsake sin, whether they like it or not, it destroys their free will, and leads to *compulsory goodness*, which is very like a contradiction in terms. For goodness cannot be ascribed to mere machines without free will, which only act under compulsion; and yet on this theory men would be nothing more.

(3) *Their annihilation.*

Lastly, as to the other and only possible alternative, the *annihilation* or final destruction of the wicked. This may be more accurately described as their failure to obtain everlasting life. Immortality is here regarded not as the attribute of all men, but as being *conditional*

on a man's fulfilling certain duties and developing a certain character in this life. And the wicked, not having done this, will eventually be destroyed and cease to exist. Numerous texts can be quoted in favour of this theory.<sup>1</sup> And it is also supported by the analogy of nature: for if an organism or a species is a failure, it eventually *ceases to be*. It is not kept alive for ever as a disfigurement to the world.

This theory, no doubt, presents less moral difficulties than either of the others, but it is not free from them. For are the wicked to be punished after death previous to their annihilation? If they are not, justice is not satisfied; and while disproportionate punishment seems a reflection on God's character, no punishment at all for prosperous sinners seems equally so. And yet, on the other hand, any punishment which precedes annihilation seems merely vindictive, and of no possible use. Anyhow, this theory cannot be said to be so probable as to render any other incredible. And of the two other possible theories, the *endless misery* of the wicked seems on the whole less difficult to believe than their *endless happiness*. While, as we have seen, it is also the one most strongly supported by Scripture. The Athanasian Creed, then, in asserting this doctrine seems fully justified.

One remark may however be made in conclusion. It is that whatever doubt may exist as to the precise state of the wicked, of one thing we may be quite sure—that their punishment will not be in excess of what they deserve. They will be equitably dealt with;

<sup>1</sup> E.g., John 6. 51; 17. 3; Rom. 6. 23; Matt. 10. 28.

and every merciful allowance will be made for circumstances, including the inherent weakness of human nature. Christianity indeed seems to emphasise this more than any other religion, since men are to be judged not by the Father, but by the Son ; apparently for the very reason that, being Man, He can sympathise with human weakness.<sup>1</sup> And after the judgment, persons will enjoy heaven just in proportion as their lives on earth have rendered them capable of doing so, while the misery of the lost will also be in exact proportion to what they deserve.

(C.) THE IMPORTANCE OF A RIGHT BELIEF.

The last doctrine to be considered is that of the importance of a Right Belief. This is strongly insisted on in the *warning clauses* of the Athanasian Creed ; so we will first consider their meaning, then their truthfulness, and lastly, the objection as to dogmatism.

(1.) *The meaning of these clauses.*

Before discussing this, it may be pointed out that they are often called the *damnatory* or *uncharitable* clauses ; but both these terms are somewhat misleading. For the Church does not condemn anyone by these clauses, but merely declares that certain persons will be condemned by God, which is a very different thing. The Church does not desire their condemnation, but the contrary ; and therefore, believing the danger to be a fact, it is stated in the hope that persons may in consequence avoid it. An analogy may help to illustrate this distinction. Suppose a despotic ruler in some island were to put up a notice that

<sup>1</sup> John 5. 27.

anyone walking along a certain part of the coast would be shot ; this might well be called uncharitable. But now, suppose the notice was that, owing to there being quicksands along that part of the coast, anyone walking there would be drowned ; this might be untrue, but it could scarcely be called uncharitable. And similarly with the Athanasian Creed. Its warnings (whether true or false) are in no sense damnatory or uncharitable. They are also quite different from some of the Psalms, where the writer does not merely state that the wicked will be miserable, but prays that they may be so.<sup>1</sup> This no doubt seems uncharitable, but there is nothing corresponding to it in the Creed.

What the Creed asserts is that *holding* (or retaining hold of) the Catholic Faith, especially the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, is *necessary* to salvation (vv. 1, 28, 29, 42) ; and that those who do not *keep* (or preserve) this Faith will perish everlastingly (v. 2). This word *keep*, it should be noticed, implies previous possession, since a man cannot keep what he never had ; so the verse is inapplicable to heathens, infidels, or even nominal Christians, who have never really held the Catholic Faith. It refers only to apostates—to those who, having once held the Faith, do not keep it ; and all will admit that the position of an apostate is not like that of another man. For instance, a heathen who rejects polytheism, and becomes a Unitarian, is advancing to half the truth ; but a Christian who rejects Christianity and becomes

<sup>1</sup> E.g., Ps. 109.



a Unitarian is retreating from the whole truth to the half. It may end in the same belief, but their moral position is very different ; and according to the Creed it is the apostates who do not *keep* the Faith that are to perish everlastingly. Moreover, this need not be the same as going into everlasting fire. The words would be quite satisfied by annihilation, which they seem to imply. While, as we have seen, the Creed elsewhere expressly limits the everlasting fire to those *who have done evil* ; just as everlasting life is limited to those *who have done good*.

Combining these statements then, we arrive at the following result : that holding the Catholic Faith, and a good life are *both* necessary to salvation or endless happiness ; that a bad life leads to endless misery ; and that apostasy leads to perishing everlastingly. But as to what will be the fate of those who, though they have never held the Faith, yet lead a good life, the Creed says nothing. These, then, are the warning clauses ; and it need only be added that the Creed nowhere implies that belief in these clauses themselves is essential to salvation, but only belief in the great Christian Doctrines, such as the Trinity, and the Incarnation.

(2.) *The truthfulness of these clauses.*

Having now shown what the warning clauses actually mean, we have next to consider whether they are true. Now, it is plain from the nature of the case that man can know nothing on such a subject, except what is revealed by God. Is then this doctrine stated or implied in the New Testament ? Certainly it is, since

belief in Christ is everywhere laid down as *necessary* to salvation. For example (to quote but six texts, which have been purposely selected from as many different writings), we are told that while he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that disbelieveth shall be condemned; that unless men believe in Christ they shall die in their sins; that His is the only Name under heaven wherein men can be saved; that public confession of Him as Lord, together with belief in His Resurrection, leads to salvation; that if anyone, even an angel from heaven, preaches another Gospel, he is to be anathema; and that whoever confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God, and that whoever denies it is not of God.<sup>1</sup>

Now it is obvious that the belief in Christ here insisted on, which includes His Divinity, Incarnation, and Resurrection, must mean believing the truth about Christ, and not a false belief. If, then, the statements in the Creed represent the truth about Christ, as we have shown they do, then belief in these is necessary to salvation. And the truth about Christ must include His relationship to God the Father, *i.e.*, the doctrine of the Trinity; so that the warning clauses as to the importance of a right belief, including the danger of apostasy,<sup>2</sup> are fully justified by Scripture.

And it may be noticed in corroboration of this Christian doctrine that it explains a most remarkable omission in the Old Testament. The Mosaic Laws, as

<sup>1</sup> Mark 16. 16; John 8. 24; Acts 4. 12; Rom. 10. 9; Gal. 1. 8;  
<sup>1</sup> John 4. 2, 3; see also John 3. 16-18.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. 6. 4-6; 2 Pet. 2. 21.

is well known, contain no reference to a future life ; and yet this was a most prominent doctrine in the Egyptian religion, from which the Jewish was so largely derived. It cannot therefore have been unknown or accidentally left out, but was evidently a designed omission. And to anyone who believes in a future life, such an omission is most remarkable. But Christianity has the key to this as to most other difficulties connected with the Jewish religion. Eternal happiness was never promised to the Jews, because the means of obtaining it (belief in Christ) were not then within their reach, though such means were doubtless afforded them in the *Intermediate State*, between Death and Judgment.<sup>1</sup> This is one of those *secret harmonies*, as they are called, which the comparative study of the Bible so often reveals.

The Intermediate State may also meet the case of the *heathen*. They have had no adequate probation in this life, no chance of accepting salvation. And yet on the one hand they could scarcely be saved without believing in Christ ; while on the other they could scarcely be condemned if they had had no chance of believing. And even for Christians it may afford a time of purification and development, which the best of men seem to require before they are fit for the immediate presence of God.

Four further remarks may be made as to the warning clauses. The first is that the Creed is addressed to *Christians* only. This is clear not only from its history, for it was composed solely for Christians, but

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. 3. 19.

also from the opening sentence, *Quicumque vult salvus esse*, which means literally 'Whosoever wishes to be saved'; and this takes for granted that the persons addressed have heard of salvation. It cannot therefore be held to refer to any but Christians, no matter how general the language may be. In the same way a royal proclamation might contain the words *every man*, but they would only refer to the king's own subjects and not to foreigners.

Secondly, among Christians the Creed is intended for *theologians*. This is plain from its technical language, and it seems only fair to assume that children and unlearned persons belonging to a Church holding these doctrines would be considered as believing them, unless they actually disbelieved them. But though a child's belief,<sup>1</sup> which has nothing intellectual about it, and is merely trust and love, may be sufficient for a child, and for those with child-like intellects, something more may reasonably be expected from well-instructed Christians. And this is that we should believe these doctrines *rightly* (v. 29), though this is a most unfortunate translation of the Latin word *fideliter*, as it seems to connect it with the *right faith* of the following verse. It would be better rendered by *faithfully*, as it is in v. 42, or *heartily*. A *heartfelt belief* in the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation—a belief which has no reservation in it, no 'perhaps' about it—a belief which leads to *worship*, for 'the Catholic Faith is that we *worship* one God':—is what the Creed says is so essential, rather than a

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 18. 6.

correct, or scientifically accurate one, though this latter, this *right faith* (*fides recta*) is fully described for the benefit of theologians, and to prevent a recurrence of old and oft-refuted errors.

Thirdly, the statements in the Creed are only *general rules* ; and here as elsewhere there may be exceptions to such rules. Of course it may be said that these ought to be hinted at in the Creed itself, and doubtless many would prefer this being done. But the Church has no authority to make any exceptions to God's rules, though God Himself can of course do so. And therefore as the New Testament lays down that a true belief in Christ is necessary to salvation, this must be stated plainly ; though we may both hope and believe that God will make exceptions wherever unbelief or misbelief has not been due to a person's own fault.

Lastly, it seems certain that persons *in heaven* must believe the truth about God. Indeed, we can scarcely imagine them holding erroneous ideas on such a subject. If, then, the statements in the Creed represent the truth about God, and if persons who go to heaven must believe the truth about God, it follows as a logical necessity that no person can go to heaven who does not believe these statements ; in other words, that except a man believe the Catholic Faith he cannot be saved. Our conclusion, then, as to the *warning clauses* is this, that if the other statements in the Creed are true, these clauses do not present any great difficulty.

(3.) *The objection as to dogmatism.*

An important objection has still to be considered.

It is that the Athanasian Creed *dogmatizes* too much. Granting, it is said, that all its doctrines are deducible from the New Testament, yet why not be content with the *simpler* statements in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds? These were *sufficient* for the Church for several centuries, so why not leave other matters open for discussion, instead of treating them as *closed questions*? We will consider these four points in turn.

And first as to *dogmatism*. Christian dogmatism has been well defined as *devotion to truth for truth's sake*; since what but a love of truth could induce men to argue about such questions as the *Filioque* clause? And truth, it should be noticed, is necessarily exclusive. If I believe a certain statement to be true, it is not uncharitable, but merely logical, to say that every statement inconsistent with it is false. Now on every other subject which influences our conduct, *e.g.*, diseases, science, etc., it is admitted to be of great importance that we should know the truth and act accordingly. Why, then, should it be thought that in Religion alone this is immaterial, and that a false Creed is as good as the true one, if a man honestly believes it?

Moreover, a certain amount of dogmatism in matters of Religion seems essential. No man can intelligently serve or pray to a God of whose Nature he has formed no conception, and the moment he begins to form such a conception he is beset by difficulties. Take for example what some will consider the simplest possible prayer, *May God forgive my sins for Christ's sake*. Who, we may ask, is God; who is Christ; what is the

relation between them ; why should One be asked to forgive for the sake of the Other ; and what would happen if the sins were not forgiven ? Such difficulties cannot be avoided ; and if the statements in the Athanasian Creed are their true solution, the more clearly this is stated the better, no matter how difficult they may be.

In the next place, it is very doubtful whether the earlier Creeds are *simpler* and more easy to believe than the Athanasian. To a thoughtful reader it may well seem otherwise. For example, referring to the Trinity, the Nicene Creed first asserts that there is one God the Father, and soon afterwards it says that the Son is also God. And so in regard to the Holy Spirit, He is called the Lord, and yet it has been already stated that there is only one Lord Jesus Christ. How can all this be reconciled ? And much the same applies to the future state of the wicked. The two earlier Creeds assert the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting ; and assuming that both the good and the bad share in the resurrection, do they both share in the life everlasting ? And if not, what is to become of the bad ? These and many other questions are suggested by the earlier Creeds, and answered by the Athanasian. And to many it seems easier to believe the Creed which answers difficulties, than those which merely suggest them.

And it was for this very purpose of answering difficulties, not making them, that the Athanasian Creed was composed. The Church had found that men would not accept the bare statements of the

earlier Creeds without explanation or comment. They would have them explained, or else would explain them for themselves. And it was to prevent their doing this wrongly that the true explanation was formally adopted by the Church. The Creed, then, was not composed for the sake of asserting any new doctrines, still less as implying that those previously received were not *sufficient*, but merely to prevent them from being misunderstood. All the doctrines, as we have seen, are contained in the New Testament, and they were in consequence always believed by the Church. But it was not till after much controversy that the Church learnt to express this belief with scientific clearness and precision.

And lastly, as to these doctrines being *closed questions*. They are closed questions in much the same way as the Copernican theory of the universe is a closed question. That is to say, they have been thoroughly discussed, and (to those who believe the New Testament) the balance of probability is overwhelmingly in their favour. Of course anyone may go over the proofs again for himself, and if he wants to have an intelligent belief he should do so ; but as a rule of conduct the subject cannot be re-opened.

And it should be noticed that the Church, in thus treating certain questions as closed for her members, is only acting as other societies would do. Would a society of engineers, for instance, allow one of their members to construct an iron bridge on the supposition that the expansion of iron by heat was an open question, which he might, or might not, think worth allowing



for ? Or would a society of doctors allow one of their members to attend patients if he asserted that whether scarlet fever was infectious or not was an open question, which each patient might decide for himself ? In short, well-ascertained truth, or what is believed to be such, in every department of knowledge, is looked upon as a closed question ; and it must remain so, unless some important fresh evidence is produced. But with regard to the Creeds, no fresh evidence can be produced, unless God were to give a fresh Revelation. And, therefore, from the nature of the case they are closed questions in an even stricter sense than ascertained truths on other subjects.

This concludes a brief examination of the doctrines contained in the Three Creeds, and all of them are either contained in, or logically deducible from, the New Testament.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

THAT THEREFORE THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN  
RELIGION IS EXTREMELY PROBABLE.

(A.) THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

One remaining objection, why are there so many difficulties,  
and no more obvious proof? considered in detail.

(B.) SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

WE have now examined all the more important arguments for and against Christianity. Many of them, as we have seen, are of great complexity, and we have often been obliged to consider a few examples only of various classes of facts; but it is hoped that no important argument on either side has been entirely overlooked. One remaining objection has still to be considered.

(A.) THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

Does not, it is urged, this very fact of itself form a difficulty? Can an ordinary man be expected to ponder over arguments, objections, and counter-arguments by the dozen, even supposing the balance of probability to be in favour of the Religion? Surely, if Christianity were true, and God wished men to believe it, there would not be so many difficulties. He would have provided an easier way of proving it than this;

or, at all events, if this elaborate argument were gone into, the inference in its favour would be simply overwhelming. This is a difficulty felt perhaps by some who have read the present Essay ; fortunately it can be answered satisfactorily.

And first, as to there being so many difficulties. Several of these are simply due to the evidence in favour of Christianity being so strong. For example, if we had only one Gospel instead of four, the difficulties caused by the discrepancies between them would disappear, but the argument in favour of Christianity would not be strengthened in consequence. But still putting aside these, it must be admitted that there are many difficulties connected with the Religion. But what is the cause of this ? It is the very magnitude of the Christian Religion which opens the way for so many attacks. A religion which claims to be the only true one in the world ; to have been founded by God Himself ; to have been prepared for by prophecies and introduced by miracles ; to be the pivot on which history turns—all previous history leading up to it, and all subsequent history being moulded by it ; to be suitable for all ages and countries ; to hold the key to all mental and moral problems ; to be man's guide and comfort in this life, and his only hope for the next ;—such a religion is necessarily assailable at a great many points. But provided all these assaults can be repelled, provided this long *frontier-line*, so to speak, can be properly defended, it does not show the weakness of the religion ; on the contrary, it shows its enormous strength. A religion which made less claims would, no

doubt, have less difficulties ; but it would be less likely to be the true one. If God became Incarnate, no claims can be too vast for the Religion He founded.

And next, as to there being no *easier* means of proof. It is a simple matter of fact that the vast majority of men, both educated and uneducated, who believe Christianity, have not arrived at this belief through a long line of reasoning, such as is summarised in this Essay. They assert that there is an easier road to it. They say that God has given them a faculty of *Faith*, which, though it may be hard to explain, just as man's free will is hard to explain, does give them the most perfect conviction of the truth of Christianity. And starting with this inward conviction, it is confirmed, they say, by their daily experience, just as a man's belief in his free will is confirmed by his daily experience ; though doubtless the actual facts of life may be otherwise explained in each case. Of course, this appeal to faith is no argument to those who do not possess it. On the other hand, to those who do possess it, no arguments can appreciably weaken or strengthen it. It is a thing *sui generis*, and absolutely convincing.

It may be pointed out, however, that if man is a partly spiritual as well as a partly material being, which we have already admitted, the existence of some spiritual sense or faculty by which to appreciate spiritual truths, just as the body has material senses by which to appreciate material objects, is not on *prima facie* grounds incredible. And this is what faith claims to be ; it is a means of spiritual discernment, and may be compared to eyesight. It does not enable us to

believe what we might otherwise think to be untrue ; but it enables us to know for certain, what we might otherwise think to be only probable (*e.g.*, the existence of God). In the same way a blind man might, by feeling, think it probable that there were a certain number of pictures in a room, but could he see he would know it for certain. And just as a man, who had always been blind, ought not to reject the testimony of those who see, so a man who has no faith ought not to reject the testimony of those who have.

Still it may be asked, why should some persons be given this faculty of faith, while others are not ? The subject is no doubt a difficult one, but it is only part of a more general difficulty : why should any of God's blessings be unequally distributed in this world ? And yet they are. Doubtless if we knew more about man's final destiny we should see there was no real injustice in either case. But the subject need not be further considered here, since, as said above, no arguments can prove or disprove Christianity to those who believe by faith.

But now comes the most important part of the objection. Granting, it is said, that the subject is necessarily a difficult one, and demands a long investigation, yet when we do go through the arguments on both sides, the conclusion is not irresistible. In short, why are not the evidences in favour of Christianity *stronger* ? Of course they might be so, but we have no reason for thinking they would be. In our ordinary daily life we have never absolute certainty to guide us, but only various degrees of probability. Moreover, in Natural

Theology the reasons for believing in a personal God and the responsibility of man, though to most persons quite convincing, are certainly not irresistible, since, as a matter of fact, some men resist them. And if God intends us to act upon such evidence in common life, and also with regard to the great truths of Natural Theology, why should He not do the same with regard to Christianity? He seems, if we may use the word, to *respect* man's momentous attribute of free will even in matters of Religion; and therefore in His sight a right belief, like right conduct, may be of no value unless it is more or less voluntary. And this fully accounts for the evidences of Christianity not being overwhelming. They are amply sufficient to justify conviction; but they are not, and were probably never meant to be, sufficient to compel it.

If, however—and this is a matter of practical importance—they are strong enough to show that the Religion is *probably* true, a man who admits this is obviously bound to accept it, and live accordingly. He cannot adopt a neutral attitude, because the evidence is not demonstrative; for, as we have said, in every other subject probability, not certainty, is the guide of life; and why should religion alone be an exception?

It may also be pointed out that though perhaps the evidences of Christianity are not so strong as we should expect, they are of precisely ~~of~~ such a *kind* as we should expect. It was prepared for by prophecy; introduced by miracles; has influenced the world ever since; and in addition to all external evidences, strongly appeals to human nature. On the other hand the Christian doc-

trines are not what we should have anticipated. Thus the former are level with man's understanding, while the latter are far above it. And this would be only natural if Christianity were a revelation from God. Its doctrines would be above human reason ; its evidences would appeal to human reason.

And as we should also expect, its evidences exhibit each of the three great attributes of the Deity. His Omnipotence is shown in the miracles, His Omniscience in the prophecies, and His perfect Goodness in the Character of Christ ; so that, judged by its evidences, this Religion is one which might very reasonably have come from the God Who is All-Powerful, All-Wise, and All-Good.

(B.) SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

It now only remains to give a summary of the previous chapters, and then point out the final choice of difficulties.

In Chapter XIII. we considered the *credibility* of the Christian Religion, and decided that some of its leading doctrines, especially those referring to the Incarnation and the Atonement, seemed to be most improbable. This is what may be called the *philosophical* objection to Christianity. All that can be said on the other side is practically this, that we have no adequate means of judging ; and that when we apply similar reasoning to subjects about which we do know, such as the freedom of man or the existence of evil, it generally leads us wrong. But still the fact remains that the Religion appears most improbable.

In Chapter XIV. we considered the *external testimony*

to the *Four Gospels*, and decided that there was extremely strong testimony in favour of their traditional authorship. At the close of the second century they held the same place among Christians as they do at present ; during the middle of that century Justin shows that they were publicly read, together with the Old Testament Scriptures ; while the few earlier writers whose works have come down to us also seem to have known them.

In Chapter XV. we considered their *internal evidence*, and found that it strongly supported the above conclusion ; so that combining the two, we have an almost overwhelming argument in favour of their genuineness. On the other hand, the only important reason for disputing this is because of their miraculous contents, but in an inquiry like the present this is plainly begging the question.

In Chapter XVI. we considered a collateral argument of great importance, derived from the *Acts of the Apostles*. There are strong reasons for fixing the date of this book as A.D. 60 ; and if so it proves a still earlier date for the first three Gospels.

In Chapter XVII. we considered the testimony borne by the Gospels to the *Resurrection of Christ*, and we decided that it had every appearance of being thoroughly trustworthy. The testimony was subjected to the most minute and searching inquiry, the Veracity, Knowledge, Investigation, and Reasoning of the witnesses being separately considered ; and each was found to be supported by what seemed to be irresistible evidence. Here again, then, the choice lies between



accepting this evidence or disputing it, in defiance of all the rules of probability, and solely because of the miraculous nature of the event vouched for.

In Chapter XVIII. we considered the other New Testament *Miracles*, and came to the conclusion that they also were probably true. Indeed, from their alleged publicity, together with the fact that their occurrence was, as far as we know, never disputed at the time, either by Jews or heathens, the evidence in their favour is extremely strong.

In Chapter XIX. we considered the argument from *Prophecy*, and showed that there were general prophecies in the Old Testament of some future Messiah, who should be not only a Sovereign, but also a Sufferer ; whilst at times He is stated to be Divine. And we then examined in detail one of the many predictions referring to this Messiah, selecting Isaiah's account of His sufferings and death. These prophecies and predictions form together a most remarkable series ; many of them even singly cannot be satisfactorily explained except as referring to Christ, while in Him they are all fulfilled. Here again, then, the choice lies between accepting these predictions or disputing them simply because they are predictions, and must imply a Divine Revelation. In other words, we must face the philosophical difficulty of believing that the coincidences between the prophecies and their fulfilment were all designed, or else what we may call the *mental* difficulty of believing that they were all accidental.

In Chapter XX. we considered the *Character of Christ*, and found that this also afforded strong evi-

dence in favour of Christianity. For the admitted excellence of Christ's moral character seems quite inconsistent with deliberate falsehood on His part. And yet He kept asserting His superhuman and Divine Nature with the utmost emphasis, and was finally put to death in consequence. Here, then, once more we have the same choice before us ; we must either face the philosophical difficulty of believing in Christ's Divinity, or else the *moral* difficulty of believing that the best moral teaching the world has ever seen was the outcome of a life saturated with falsehood and presumption.

In Chapter XXI. we considered the *History of Christianity*, and found that its marvellous progress at first, in spite of its tremendous difficulties, and without the use of any force, could only be accounted for by its truth. So here for the last time we have the same alternatives to choose from. We must either face the philosophical difficulty of believing in the supernatural origin and spread of Christianity, or else the *historical* difficulty of believing that its first preachers were able to convince men without evidence, conquer them without force, and found the greatest kingdom the world has ever seen on claims which at the time everyone must have known to be untrue.

In Chapter XXII. we considered the *other evidence* on the subject, and glanced at various arguments for and against Christianity, such as its connection with the Bible and with prayer, its adaptation to human nature, and its relation to other religions ; but all of comparative unimportance.

Lastly, in Chapter XXIII. we decided that the *Three Creeds* are deducible from the New Testament ; so that the religion which has all this evidence in its favour is the Christian Religion as here defined.

From the above summary it will be seen that there is only one important argument against Christianity, and this is the *philosophical* one. The Religion itself, its doctrines, its claims, its miraculous origin, all seem most improbable. Thus the objections to Christianity all lie on the surface. They are obvious and palpable to everyone. They are admittedly great, but they will not become greater, and may become less as time goes on ; for the whole tendency of modern science is to decrease the value of *a priori* reasoning, on which alone these difficulties are founded.

On the other hand, the arguments in its favour have often to be sought for ; but when found they are seen to be stronger and stronger the more they are examined. There are four main arguments. These are of a widely different character, and each appeals most strongly to a certain class of minds, so each is often spoken of as the chief argument for Christianity, but they are probably of equal value. They may be conveniently called the argument from *Miracles*, from *Prophecy*, from *Christ's Character*, and from *History*. And it will be noticed they mutually support one another. Miracles, for instance, are less difficult to believe when it is seen that they were to inaugurate a religion which has for centuries exercised a greater influence on mankind than anything else ; and prophecies become stronger when it is seen that the Life

foretold was one that had such supreme and far-reaching effects.

Now, it is important to remember that the actual facts on which these arguments rest are in each case absolutely *unique*. Once, and only once in the history of the world, have men appeared who asserted that they were actual witnesses of miracles, and who faced all forms of suffering and death solely in consequence of this. Again, once, and only once in the history of the world, has a long series of apparently incongruous prophecies and predictions, uttered many centuries apart, united in a single Person, in whom they one and all find a complete fulfilment. Yet again, once, and only once in the history of the world, has a Man appeared of faultless moral character, who asserted that He was also God, and who boldly claimed all that this stupendous assertion involved, and submitted to the consequences. While lastly, once, and only once in the history of the world, has a Religion, most improbable in itself, and without using any force, succeeded in conquering nation after nation.

These, then, are the four chief arguments on the subject, and in every case we have the same choice before us. We must either face the philosophical difficulties in accepting Christianity, or the mental, moral, and historical difficulties in rejecting it. There is no neutral ground, no possibility of avoiding both sets of difficulties. But the difficulties on the one side concern what we do *not* know—God's purpose in creating man—and may be due to our ignorance only. The difficulties on the other side concern what we *do*

know. They are practical, they are derived from experience. We do know that men will not lay down their lives for what they believe to be false, and that the first preachers of Christianity must have known whether it was false or not. We do know that prophecies uttered at random through centuries would not all unite in a single Person. We do know that even moderately good men do not make extravagant claims. And we do know that no natural causes can account for such a religion as Christianity obtaining such a triumph as it did.

The choice, then, seems to lie between what we may call *unknown* difficulties and *known* ones. The unknown difficulty of believing that the Infinite God could so love man as to humble Himself even to death to win man's love; and the known difficulty of believing that evidence so vast and so various, so cumulative and so apparently irresistible, could all unite in making a monstrous falsehood appear to be a momentous truth. Between these two sets of difficulties we have to make our choice. But to those who agree with the previous chapters of this Essay the choice cannot be doubtful. For here, as with Theism, our beliefs must follow the line of least resistance; and, as we have shown, however hard it is to believe Christianity, it is harder still to disbelieve it. This, then, is our final conclusion, that the truth of the Christian religion is *extremely probable*, because, to put it shortly, though the difficulties of accepting Christianity are great, the difficulties of rejecting it are far greater.

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